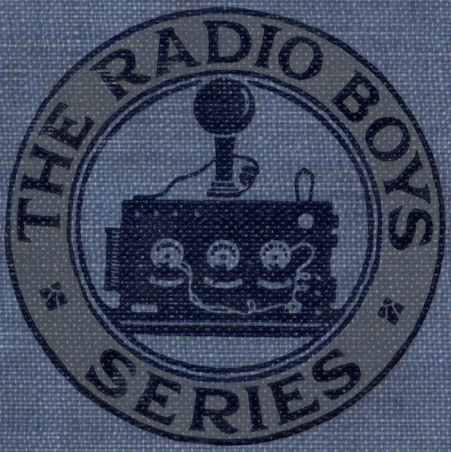
THE RADIO BOYS with the FLOOD FIGHTERS



ALLEN CHAPMAN

8

3 1926

Luther

From

Lewis

THE RADIO BOYS WITH THE FLOOD FIGHTERS

THE FLOOD STRUCK THE CAR WITH THE FORCE OF A THUNDERBOLT.

The Radio Boys With the Flood Fighters. *Page* 178

THE RADIO BOYS SERIES

(Trademark Registered)

THE RADIO BOYS WITH THE FLOOD FIGHTERS

OR

SAVING THE CITY IN THE VALLEY

BY

ALLEN CHAPMAN

AUTHOR OF

THE RADIO BOYS' FIRST WIRELESS
THE RADIO BOYS WITH THE ICEBERG PATROL
RALPH OF THE ROUNDHOUSE
RALPH ON THE MIDNIGHT FLYER, ETC.

WITH FOREWORD BY

JACK BINNS

ILLUSTRATED BY

WALTER S. ROGERS

NEW YORK

GROSSET & DUNLAP

PUBLISHERS

Made in the United States of America

BOOKS FOR BOYS
By ALLEN CHAPMAN

12mo. Cloth. Illustrated.

THE RADIO BOYS SERIES
(Trademark Registered)

THE RADIO BOYS' FIRST WIRELESS
Or Winning the Ferberton Prize
THE RADIO BOYS AT OCEAN POINT
Or The Message that Saved the Ship
THE RADIO BOYS AT THE SENDING STATION
Or Making Good in the Wireless Room
THE RADIO BOYS AT MOUNTAIN PASS
Or The Midnight Call for Assistance
THE RADIO BOYS TRAILING A VOICE
Or Solving a Wireless Mystery
THE RADIO BOYS WITH THE FOREST RANGERS
Or The Great Fire on Spruce Mountain
THE RADIO BOYS WITH THE ICEBERG PATROL
Or Making Safe the Ocean Lanes
THE RADIO BOYS WITH THE FLOOD FIGHTERS
Or Saving the City in the Valley

THE RAILROAD SERIES

RALPH OF THE ROUNDHOUSE
Or Bound to Become a Railroad Man
RALPH IN THE SWITCH TOWER
Or Clearing the Track
RALPH ON THE ENGINE
Or The Young Fireman of the Limited Mail
RALPH ON THE OVERLAND EXPRESS
Or The Trials and Triumphs of a Young Engineer
RALPH, THE TRAIN DISPATCHER
Or The Mystery of the Pay Car
RALPH ON THE ARMY TRAIN
Or The Young Railroader's Most Daring Exploit
RALPH ON THE MIDNIGHT FLYER
Or The Wreck at Shadow Valley
RALPH AND THE MISSING MAIL POUCH
Or The Stolen Government Bonds

GROSSET & DUNLAP, Publishers, New York

COPYRIGHT, 1925, BY
GROSSET & DUNLAP

The Radio Boys with the Flood Fighters

FOREWORD

By Jack Binns

In the brief span of three years radio has inundated humanity in a wave of enthusiasm which has no parallel in history. Its influence is active along the sandy edges of Sahara, under the burning sun of Asia, on the pampas of South America, and beneath the antipodean skies as well as the more highly developed communities of Europe and North America.

Who is responsible for this unequaled expansion? The American boy!

Boys instilled with the enthusiasm, vigor, cleanness of mind and straightforwardness of purpose—such as the Radio Boys, the wholesome heroes of this series—have been responsible for the gigantic grip radio has exerted upon us all.

In this series we have seen the Radio Boys apply their hobby to every phase of endeavor to aid humanity. Now we see them apply it to rescue those threatened by one of Nature's greatest terrors—flood. With most homes radio-equipped, this terror has lost much of its horror, because

radio broadcasting can now send out timely warning in time of emergency.

An example of this is portrayed in the experience of the 131st Infantry Regiment in Chicago during an Armistice Day program. A mobilization call was sent out as a test without previous notice. Within two hours the officers and men of the entire regiment had reported to headquarters as a result of the radio call.

This experience conclusively proves that the residents of an entire valley could be warned of impending danger by radio much quicker than they could by telephone.

CONTENTS

CHAPTER		PAGE
I.	An Appalling Moment	9
II.	A Close Call	19
III.	A Coward's Trick	31
IV.	Caught in the Act	41
V.	The Bully Meets His Match	50
VI.	The Red Terror	60
VII.	A Thrilling Rescue	69
VIII.	Uncle Lon Appears	79
IX.	The Fly in the Ointment	89
X.	Off for Horseshoe Valley	96
XI.	Down the Well	104
XII.	Turning the Tables	112
XIII.	Face to Face with Old Enemies	119
XIV.	A Fruitless Chase	128
XV.	A Hot Encounter	136
XVI.	Falling Through Space	142
XVII.	In Terrible Plight	151
XVIII.	A Frenzied Search	157
XIX.	Just in Time	163

CHAPTER		PAGE
XX.	The Rush of the Torrent	169
XXI.	At the Mercy of the Flood	178
XXII.	A Desperate Fight	186
XXIII.	The Dam Is Breakning	193
XXIV.	To the Rescue	199
XXV.	A Hard-Won Victory	209

THE RADIO BOYS WITH THE FLOOD FIGHTERS

CHAPTER I

AN APPALLING MOMENT

"THIS train sure is doing some traveling," remarked Bob Layton, as he looked out of a window of the car in which he and his friends were speeding toward home.

"You said something!" replied Joe Atwood. "The way those telegraph poles seem to be flying by makes me dizzy."

"Can't go too fast to suit me," chimed in Herb Fennington. "Every click of the rails tells me we're getting that much nearer to Clintonia. And that's where this child wants to be."

"Good old Clintonia!" exclaimed Jimmy Plummer. "It sure will look good to me after being away from it so long. Though, at that, it's been so changed by the fire that I suppose we'll hardly know the old place."

"It will seem strange at first," admitted Bob. "But the folks will be the same, and when the

town is built up again, it will be handsomer and better than ever. By the way, Jimmy, how is Hector standing the trip?"

"Fine and dandy," replied Jimmy. "Bet he never had such good feeds before in his life. The only thing is that he can't find any place in the baggage car to hide his bones."

"Tell him to get as fat as you are, and his bones will be hidden all right," chaffed Herb, looking with a grin at the roly-poly figure of his friend.

"I'll admit they don't stand out as plain as yours do in your head," Jimmy came back at him.

"That ought to hold you for a while, Herb," said Bob, with a laugh. "But let's go in and take a look at the mutt."

"I like that!" said Jimmy indignantly. "Where do you get that? 'Mutt!' He wouldn't take any prizes at a dog show, maybe, but he was good enough to save my life."

"You mean when he took a nip at the leg of the polar bear that was going to nab you when you slipped on that piece of ice," replied Bob. "Right you are, old boy. I take it all back. He isn't a mutt. He's a hero."

"Now you're talking!" said Jimmy, somewhat placated, as he led the way to the baggage car, followed by the others.

The moment they entered Hector sprang up with a joyous bark and capered about them, paying special attention to Jimmy, whom he had adopted as his master. The latter took a sandwich out of his pocket and threw it to the dog, who devoured it at a gulp and then stood wagging his tail expectantly.

Nor was he disappointed, for another sandwich followed the first, and was devoured with the same lightning rapidity.

"For the love of Pete! how many sandwiches are you carrying around with you, anyway?" exclaimed Joe.

"Ask him how many he's carrying around inside of him," put in Herb. "He's been munching them all the morning."

"I had a rather light breakfast," murmured Jimmy.

"Light breakfast!" exclaimed Bob. "Why, all the waiters in the dining car were rolling their eyes and getting callous places on their feet from bringing things. Grapefruit, four bowls of cereal——"

"Three," corrected Jimmy, in the interests of accuracy.

"Three helpings of ham and eggs," went on Bob.

"Two," said Jimmy severely.

"And fried potatoes and a platter of wheat

cakes and two glasses of milk and a cup of coffee," concluded Bob. "If that's a light breakfast, fellows, what would Jimmy think a heavy one was?"

"What do you want me to do—waste away to a shadow?" asked Jimmy defensively.

The thought of Jimmy as a shadow was too much for his companions' gravity, and they broke into a roar of laughter that was attended by sympathetic grins on the faces of the two baggagemen who had heard the conversation.

With a pat on the head for Hector, who whined dolorously when he saw they were about to leave him, the boys went back to their own coach and seats.

Bob pulled a time-table from his pocket that was already frayed by frequent consultations and studied it for a moment.

"Less than two hundred miles to go, fellows, and the train's keeping right up to its schedule," he announced. "We ought to be pulling into Clintonia at about five o'clock this afternoon."

"Gee, but it will be good to get our hands on our old radio sets again," remarked Joe. "It will be like meeting with old friends."

"It sure will," agreed Bob. "And now we'll know a mighty sight more about them than we did when we left them. I tell you, fellows, the experience we had in the wireless room of the

Meteor is the swellest thing that ever happened. It's too bad that the operators fell sick when they did, but I'm mighty glad we happened to be on board just then to take their places."

"You bet I am," agreed Joe emphatically. "But with all the practical experience we got, I have a hunch that it will take us quite a while to catch up with the new things that have been discovered since we started on the cruise."

"Sure thing," declared Bob. "I don't suppose there's anything in the world that's advancing so fast as radio. One fellow finds something new to-day, but it's dead sure that some other fellow will find something newer to-morrow. You've got to be hustling all the time to keep up with the procession."

"I'm crazy to get hold of some of the latest radio books and magazines and catch up with things," said Joe.

"Or better still, to get hold of Doctor Dale and have him tell us about them," suggested Herb.

"Righto," acquiesced Bob emphatically. "I tell you, what the doctor doesn't know about radio isn't worth knowing. He doesn't let anything get by him. And he makes everything so clear."

"He's done more for us along that line than any one else," affirmed Joe. "We wouldn't have been half so far along if it hadn't been for him."

"You bet that the first thing I do after I've

seen my own folks is to make tracks for his house," declared Bob. "I'm glad that didn't go down in the fire."

In a short time the four boys reached Braxton. Here a change of engines was made that required several minutes, and the boys got out, glad of a chance to stretch their legs by a stroll on the station platform.

"What are you looking at so steadily, Jimmy?" asked Bob, as he saw that his friend's head was turned steadfastly in one direction.

"It's that bakery across the street," gibed Herb. "Jimmy turns toward it like a magnet toward the pole."

"They sure do have some nifty looking doughnuts over in the window," remarked Jimmy reflectively. "They're probably not as good as my mother makes; but they may be, at that. The only way to find out is to try them."

"I'd pass them up, if I were you, Jimmy," counseled Bob, as Jimmy made a move toward the store. "It's nearly time for the train to start, and you may get left. The engine's backing up now."

"Oh, I won't be a minute," said Jimmy, as he started to cross the street.

His companions laughed, but a little uneasily. There was a clanking of the cars as the new engine reached them and was coupled on. The

porters took up their stools and climbed on board. The conductor came out of the office where he had been scanning the train orders.

"All aboard!" he shouted.

Still no Jimmy, and the other boys became frenzied with anxiety.

"He'll be left!" cried Joe. "Why did we let him go over there? We ought to have held him back by main force."

The conductor gave the signal, and with a shrill shriek of the whistle and a clangor of the bell the long train began to move.

"Jimmy! Jimmy!" the boys yelled frantically.

At that moment Jimmy emerged from the bakery, holding a big paper bag. He cast one startled look at the moving train, and then rushed for it as fast as his short legs could carry him.

By the time he reached it, the train was beginning to gather speed. Jimmy raced for the steps of the car where Bob and Joe were standing, each with one hand on the rail and the other stretched out to aid their comrade.

Without their help, Jimmy could never have made it. But he did manage to get within range, and their arms reached out and grabbed him and dragged him on to the lower step and then up to the platform, where he tumbled and sprawled flat.

As he did so, the bag was torn from his hand

by coming in contact with part of the platform rail and a pile of doughnuts fell between the cars and were strewn along the roadbed.

"All of them gone, after going to all that trouble to get them!" Jimmy moaned.

"You ought to be glad that you're alive," said Bob severely. "A little more, and you might have gone under the wheels. That appetite of yours will be the death of you yet, you old cormorant."

Jimmy was too crushed to make any retort, and he followed his chums meekly into the car. But when the call came to dinner a little later, he made full amends for his disappointment.

They were getting now into familiar territory, and the youths' excitement increased as they realized that they would soon reach home, the home which many times in the last few stirring months they had feared they would never see again.

And a thrill went through them when at last they heard the stentorian voice of the trainman announce:

"Next stop, Clintonia!"

The boys gathered up their suitcases and other belongings, and crowded into the aisle as near the door as they could get, so as to be ready to leap off the moment the train came to a stop.

As they neared the town and were passing

through the outskirts, the train slackened speed and finally stopped three hundred yards short of the station.

The boys fumed and fretted.

"What's the matter with the old bus, I wonder?" grumbled Herb.

"Got to wait for some other train to switch on another track, I suppose," conjectured Bob, as he stepped out on the platform to see if he could find out what the trouble was.

A startled exclamation a moment later brought the others to his side.

"What's the matter?" asked Joe.

"Look at that auto!" cried Bob. "It seems to be stalled on that other track," and he pointed to one of the many tracks that ran through the yards at that point.

There were no gates at the crossing, and it seemed evident that the driver of the car had started to cross but had seen the train on which the boys were coming and had waited for it to go by. Now, however, that their train had come to a stop, the occupant of the car had realized that it was a dangerous point to stop, and was trying to go back to the street until the crossing should be clear. They could see that the driver was trying to get the car started, but it did not move.

"Seems to be stalled," remarked Joe.

"Something familiar about that car," remarked Herb. "By jiminy, it's Doctor Dale's car, and that's the doctor himself in it!"

"Surest thing you know," agreed Jimmy, a note of anxiety in his voice.

Suddenly Bob gave vent to a shout of alarm.

"There's a freight train backing down on that track!" he cried, as he pointed to a long string of cars that had switched from another track and was moving rapidly toward the auto.

"And the engineer can't see him!" shouted Joe. "The doctor'll be killed!"

"And the doctor doesn't see the train either," groaned Jimmy, as they noted that the occupant of the car was engrossed in his attempts to get it started.

They yelled a warning with all their might, but their voices were lost in the din of the train yards.

"Quick, fellows, follow me!" commanded Bob, leaping to the ground.

The next instant he was racing toward the automobile, with his comrades close upon his heels.

CHAPTER II

A CLOSE CALL

It was rough traveling over the rails and frogs and switches, but the four boys were running for a life, and in a surprisingly short time they reached the stalled automobile.

At their shouts, the occupant of the car raised his head, and a smile of pleasure came over his face as he recognized them, to be supplanted immediately by a startled look as he saw their frightened faces.

"Jump, Doctor, quick!" shouted Bob. "Quick! There's a train coming!"

Doctor Dale cast a glance toward the backing freight, and with one quick movement leaped to the ground.

The train was now a hundred yards away. Bob measured the distance and the rate at which it was coming.

"We've got a chance!" he cried. "Push, fellows, push!"

He set the example, and the other boys and

the doctor joined, and by their united efforts pushed the automobile back from the track. Their margin was so close that they had barely time to jump to safety before the freight rumbled by, its engineer, far up in front, wholly unconscious of the tragedy that had been so narrowly averted.

The boys stood panting, so wrought up by the physical effort and the mental strain that for a moment they could not speak.

While they are trying to get back their breath, it may be well, for the benefit of those who have not read the preceding volumes of this series, to tell who the boys were and what had been their adventures up to the time this story opens.

As has been gathered from the preceding chapter, their homes were in Clintonia. This was a thriving town of about ten thousand population on the banks of the Shagary River, less than a hundred miles from New York City.

Bob Layton was the son of a prosperous and highly respected druggist of the town. Bob was sixteen years of age, tall, of dark complexion, frank and straightforward, and a favorite with the townspeople because of his sunny disposition and upright character. Among the boys of his own age he was a leader in baseball, football and other sports. His courage had been tested in

many ways, and when the pinch came he was never found lacking.

His closest friend was Joe Atwood, of about his own age, the son of one of the leading doctors of Clintonia. Joe was blue-eyed and of fair complexion. He and Bob were alike in many respects, though Joe had a hair-trigger temper that sometimes got him into hot water, from which Bob had some trouble in rescuing him. They were the warmest of chums, in the same classes at the high school, and where one was to be found the other was usually not far distant.

Closely associated with the two boys were two others, somewhat younger, Herb Fennington and Jimmy Plummer. Herb's father kept the largest general store in town and was a leader in civic affairs. The industry that had given him this position was little shared, however, by Herb, who was very fond of work—when others did it. If he worked hard at anything, it was thinking up jokes and conundrums to spring on his unsuspecting mates.

Jimmy Plummer, the son of a contractor and builder, was a jolly good-natured boy, round and fat and blessed with an appetite that had won him the nickname of "Doughnuts," in token of his special fondness for that toothsome luxury, which his mother made to perfection.

The boys had drifted together from mutual

liking, and their friendship was made the stronger by their common interest in radio. From the moment that wonderful discovery took its tremendous hold on the public, the boys had become ardent "fans." Almost all their spare time was spent in reading and talking about the latest developments in the marvelous science, to such an extent, indeed, that it became common among the townspeople to refer to them as the "Radio Boys."

While they were on friendly terms with all the worthwhile boys in the town, there was a certain tough element with whom they often had trouble, though this was not of their own seeking. A big bullying type of boy, Buck Looker, son of a rich resident, was the ringleader of his group, and he was ably seconded in the low tricks he thought up and carried out by Carl Lutz, his special toady, and Terence Mooney, a somewhat smaller boy and a born sneak.

A great friend of the Radio Boys was Doctor Amory Dale, the pastor of the Old First Church of Clintonia. He was a gifted preacher, but he was more than that. He had a deep understanding of boyish nature and a thorough sympathy with it. There was nothing stiff or "stand-offish" about him, and his influence over the boys was heightened by their knowledge that he had been a star baseball and football player in his college

days. He was keenly interested in science, especially in radio, and again and again the boys had been helped by him when they came up against a knotty point in making and using their receiving sets.

How a stimulus was given to their love of radio by a prize competition for homemade sets which they entered and won; what a curious combination of circumstances involved them in the tracing down of a rascal who had defrauded an orphan girl; what thrilling adventures they met with in doing this are told in the first volume of this series, entitled: "The Radio Boys' First Wireless; or, Winning the Ferberton Prize."

Other volumes narrate their further stirring experiences in the field of radio. At the seashore, where they had put up their sets, they were instrumental in saving by means of wireless a vessel in which some of their own relatives were traveling.

Some time afterward they were introduced to the mysteries of a sending station, and were themselves placed on the program that was broadcast to an invisible audience of hundreds and thousands. On a vacation in the woods they overheard and exposed the plot of a gang of rascally sharpers and secured the return to jail of desperate convicts who had escaped their guards.

They made the acquaintance of a Forest Ranger and served for a while with the brave men whose work it was to quell forest fires and were themselves trapped in a terrible conflagration.

On a voyage their ship was sunk in a collision and they were picked up by a vessel of the Iceberg Patrol. The dangers they met from bears and icebergs in that perilous work are fully recorded in the preceding volume of the series, entitled: "The Radio Boys with the Iceberg Patrol; or, Making Safe the Ocean Lanes."

It was while on their return journey from this last novel and exciting experience that they caught sight of the stalled automobile that, together with its occupant, they had rescued just in the nick of time.

Doctor Dale was the first to speak after the freight train had thundered by.

"I don't know how I can thank you enough, boys," he said, his voice full of emotion as he looked about on the faces of his flushed and smiling deliverers. "You've certainly saved my life. Another minute and it would have been all over with me."

"We owe you a good deal more than you will ever owe us," replied Bob. "We're mighty glad that we saw you in time. It was just luck that our train happened to be standing where it was."

"I'd call it Providence," returned the doctor. "And to cap the climax, you've saved my car too. It's a new one and I hadn't got quite familiar with it. That's how I came to be stalled. And I was so absorbed in trying to find out what was the matter with it that I didn't keep the lookout that I should. It was inexcusably careless of me. But I'm mighty glad that the best and bravest boys I know were at hand to help me out. You can depend upon it, I'll never forget it."

Just then there came a toot from the whistle of the train on which the boys had been traveling.

"We'll have to make a break, Doctor," said Bob, as he and his comrades prepared to run. "All our baggage is on the train. We'll see you later."

"I'm glad to see you back, and you can't come up to my house too soon," replied the doctor. "I claim your first visit after you've seen your families. You'll find them all at the station waiting for you."

The boys waved their hands and rushed for the train, which was just beginning to move. They boarded it, took possession of their bags, and then stood waiting eagerly for the train to draw up to the station.

"I suppose they've killed the fatted calf for their prodigal sons," remarked Bob, with a happy smile.

"How could they when Jimmy is still with us?" chaffed Herb.

Before Jimmy could think of a suitable retort, the train drew up in the station.

There they all were, the dear loved folks, looking eagerly for their boys over whom they had worried and for whom they had hungered. There were Mr. and Mrs. Layton, and Doctor and Mrs. Atwood, with Joe's pretty sister, Rose, and Mr. and Mrs. Plummer, and Herb's father and mother, besides his sisters, Agnes and Amy, and his younger brothers, Tommy and Derry. There were a host of others, too, friends of the boys who had come to welcome them back.

There was a wild whoop from the Radio Boys as they jumped off the train. The next moment they were being fairly smothered in the embraces of their mothers, all of them crying and calling their boys by endearing names, while their fathers patted them on the shoulders and seemed to be afflicted with severe colds as they blew their noses vigorously and Rose and Agnes and Amy and Tommy and Derry fluttered around them and demanded their share of kisses.

It was a happy pandemonium for a while, and their friends, smiling, held aloof until the first gladness of reunion had spent itself. Then they too came forward with their congratulations, and

it was a long time before the boys could pick up their bags and make their way homeward in the center of a joyous turmoil of questions and answers that seemed as though it would never quiet down. Hector was not forgotten, but trotted along at Jimmy's heels, wagging his tail and emitting barks of joyous excitement, as though he fully understood that it was a gala occasion.

It was almost like a triumphal march, as storekeepers and neighbors came to their doors and called out their greetings, and the hearts of the boys swelled as they responded to the welcome of the kindly folk with whom they were such favorites. They had had many exciting adventures that they would not have missed for the world, but, oh, how good it was to be at home again!

They were delighted to note also how quickly the town was recovering from the disastrous fire that had swept it in their absence. The better part of the town had largely escaped the flames, and the new and better buildings that were going up in the damaged quarters promised to increase the beauty and desirability of the city.

There was just one discordant note in the chorus of welcome.

"See who's here," murmured Herb, giving Bob a nudge in the ribs as they were passing the Sterling House.

Bob looked in the direction indicated and saw a little group, comprising Buck Looker, Carl Lutz and Terence Mooney, standing apart.

"The Three Musketeers," remarked Bob, with a grin.

"The three mosquitoes, if you ask me," grunted Jimmy. "They'd like nothing better than to sting. Look at their faces. They'd curdle a can of milk."

"They're just delirious with joy that we've got back," remarked Joe, as he noted the sneer on Buck's face and the lowering looks of Lutz and Mooney.

"I suppose they expected every iceberg to do its duty," laughed Bob, "and now they're sore because it didn't."

"They're thinking of the lambasting we gave them when they cut the leading-in wires," observed Joe.

The Radio Boys glanced at the bullies as they went by, but the precious trio kept their faces studiously averted.

"They'll be sitting up nights now, I suppose, trying to think of something to down us," remarked Jimmy, with a grimace of distaste.

"Let them," responded Bob carelessly. "If they can put anything over on us it will be because we've lost our punch, and then we'll deserve it."

The family groups dropped off one by one as they reached their respective homes. And it is safe to say that there were no happier homes in the state than those at whose supper tables that night the Radio Boys narrated their adventures.

Nor were there anywhere more enthralled and interested audiences, as, with faces paling and flushing, the members of the various families listened to the eventful happenings of that trip on the Iceberg Patrol—the clash of the vessels in the dark, the rescue after the tossing about in small boats on the hungry sea, the blowing up of the derelict, the shattering of the mighty iceberg, the closing in of the giant bergs on the apparently doomed ship, the narrow escape from the clutches of the polar bears.

There were startled exclamations, too, when the boys told of the close call that Doctor Dale had had that afternoon on the railroad track and of the timely way in which the boys had saved him from death.

"You did a good thing for the doctor," remarked Mr. Layton, "and at the same time you did a good thing for Clintonia. It would have been a calamity to the town if anything had happened to a man like that."

"Yes, indeed," assented Mrs. Layton heartily. "He's been a wonderful comfort to all of us while you boys have been away. He's cheered

and braced us up when we were ready to despair. I don't know what we'd have done without him."

There was so much to talk about and rejoice over that it was very late when the Layton family at last got ready for bed.

Bob was very tired, but, perhaps because he was overtired, found it hard to get to sleep. Long after his parents were sleeping soundly he tossed about restlessly.

At last he was just dropping off to sleep when the telephone bell in the hall rang. He sprang up hastily, so as to choke off the ringing before it woke his parents.

"Bob Layton speaking," he said, as he picked up the receiver.

"So you're that four-flusher, are you?" came a rough, jeering voice. "The conquering hero—I don't think! Well, let me tell you, Mr. Conquering Hero, that we've got your number and you're due for a tumble. Paste that in your hat. Get me?"

CHAPTER III

A COWARD'S TRICK

FOR a moment Bob was dumb with surprise. Then a wave of indignation rushed over him.

"You wouldn't dare say that to my face!" he cried angrily. "Who are you, anyway?"

"Don't you wish you knew?" came the taunting voice at the other end of the wire, accompanied by a guffaw in which several others joined. Then came a sharp click as the instrument was hung up.

Bob's first impulse was to call up Central and learn the source of the message. He discarded this idea, however, as it might have involved a prolonged conversation which would probably awaken his father and mother. It might, too, involve publicity and be the cause of an item in the town paper, which would be profoundly distasteful both to him and to his parents.

Then, too, it had always been his habit to settle his own troubles with as little outside interference as possible. He decided to keep to his system in

this case. His fingers itched to get hold of the coward who had seized on that perfectly safe way to hurl an insult and escape the consequences.

The purpose of the message was of course obvious. Some enemy had sought to mar the happiness of his homecoming, to instill a drop of poison in his cup of contentment, to spoil the end of a perfect day. And at this moment the cheap perpetrator of the trick was chuckling at the thought that he had angered and upset him.

Well, he laughs best who laughs last, and Bob's fist clenched as he vowed to himself that the last laugh should be his. It would have gone hard with the craven at the other end of the wire if he had come within range of Bob at that moment.

Of course he thought at once of Buck Looker. It was quite in line with that bully's character. There were few things to which he would not stoop. But it had not been Buck's voice.

Still that did not prove anything. It would be just like Buck to get somebody else to do his dirty work. There had evidently been a gang listening to the conversation, as had been shown by the several voices that had joined in the burst of coarse laughter.

Slowly Bob retraced his steps into his room and slipped into bed, but in his disturbed state of mind it was a long time before he dropped off into slumber.

The next morning he said nothing to his parents about the midnight message. They were so joyous at his return that he did not want to mar their happiness in the slightest degree.

It had been arranged that the Radio Boys should start their school work at once, as their absence had already caused them to lose the first weeks of the term, and they had a good deal to make up to get on even terms with their classmates.

Joe, Jimmy and Herb passed Bob's house on the way to school, and Bob ran out to join them as they came abreast of the gate.

"Thought I'd never get up in time this morning," remarked Joe, as Bob swung into step. "I was dog-tired last night and slept like a top."

"Guess we all did," said Herb.

"Count me out," said Bob. "I was tired all right, but a nice little telephone message came about midnight to keep me awake."

"Funny time to 'phone," commented Joe.

"And a curious kind of message," observed Bob, and then, in answer to the inquiring looks of his comrades, told them of the happening of the night before.

There was a chorus of exclamations of anger and disgust at the paltry trick.

"Well, if that isn't the limit!" cried Jimmy.

"So brave to call a fellow names at the other

end of a telephone!" exclaimed Herb. "I don't see how those curs could look each other in the face."

"There isn't much I'd put past Buck Looker," said Joe, "but I hardly thought that even he would sink so low as that. And that's the fellow whose life we saved in the forest fire!"

"Of course we can't be dead sure that it was Buck," said Bob. "It certainly wasn't his voice. And it didn't sound like Lutz or Mooney, either."

"It was Buck's doing all right," insisted Joe. "I'd bet a dollar to a plugged nickel on it. He thinks up the low schemes and gets somebody else to carry them out for him. Probably the fellow who used the 'phone was Bud Hayes, or one of the other cronies that hang around Buck because his father's one of the richest men in town."

"What are you going to do about it, Bob?" asked Jimmy.

"What is there to do but wait until I get some proof?" asked Bob. "Of course I could go to Buck and ask him about it, or even charge him with it, but he'd simply worm out of it. Then, too, it would tickle him to death to think that I was cut up about it. The best way at present is to treat it with the contempt that it deserves. Sooner or later I may get the goods on him, and then he'll pay more than telephone rates for that little midnight call."

"He's just about due for another licking," growled Joe.

"Overdue," amended Jimmy.

The story of their adventures had preceded the Radio Boys, and their entrance into the school caused something of a sensation. They had the warmest kind of greetings from their teachers, and when recess time came, they were surrounded by their classmates in the school yard and besieged with a host of questions as to their experiences with icebergs and polar bears.

"Some fellows have all the luck," said Jud Spearing enviously. "Here we've been boning down to lessons while you've been having the time of your lives."

"There were times when we'd have been mighty glad to change places with you," laughed Bob.

"Well, we're mighty glad to have you back with us again," said Tom Halley. "I tell you, we all felt pretty blue when we first heard of the wreck and didn't know whether you'd been picked up or not."

"I suppose when you say 'we' you mean all the fellows in the school," said Jimmy, with a twinkle in his eye.

"Well," laughed Tom, "I wouldn't go quite so far as that. There were some who seemed to bear up pretty well," and he looked significantly at Buck Looker, Lutz and Mooney, who were

standing a little apart from the rest with sneers upon their faces.

"You don't need to mention any names," said Jimmy, with a grin, as the bell rang and they all trooped in again to their classes.

The Radio Boys were so busy from that time on in making up their back work that it was not until nearly a week had elapsed that they were able to pay their promised visit to Doctor Dale.

He received them with the utmost warmth and cordiality in the pleasant living room of the parsonage.

"I'd been wondering whether you boys had forgotten me," he said, with a smile.

"We could forget our names as readily as we could forget you," returned Bob, as the boys seated themselves.

"I want to thank you again for what you did for me the other day," said the doctor. "It was the narrowest escape I ever had in my life, and I owe it to the quickness with which you acted. Lots of boys would have been so rattled that they would have hesitated, and that moment of hesitation would have cost me my life."

"If it had, we'd have lost our best friend," put in Joe warmly.

"I'm glad you feel that way," replied the doctor. "But now tell me of your adventures. I've

already heard something about them from Captain Springer."

"Captain Springer!" exclaimed Bob.

"Yes," returned the doctor, smiling. "He wrote me a long letter, and if I told you what he said about you boys I'm afraid it would make you conceited. Said it was the luckiest thing he did when he picked you up at sea, and that he didn't know what he would have done if you hadn't been on hand when his wireless operators fell sick."

"I don't know what kind of a fist we made at it, but we did the best we could," said Bob modestly, and then, in answer to the questions with which the doctor plied them, he and the other boys gave a full narration of their exciting experiences on the Iceberg Patrol.

"We were a little sore at first at being parted from our radio sets," said Bob, at the end of their story. "But, after all, we probably learned a good deal more about the wireless than we would in the same time if we had been at home."

"I've no doubt of it," affirmed the doctor. "Theory is all right, but there's nothing like theory and practice combined."

"But we still feel that lots of things have happened in radio that we haven't heard anything about," put in Joe.

"Plenty of time to make up for that," said the doctor.

"The last night we were here you were trying out your new crystal set," Bob reminded him. "Do you still think as much of it as you did then? Or have you gone back to the vacuum tube?"

"I use them both," replied Doctor Dale. "Of course, at the present time, the vacuum tube is supreme. It will be a long time before it will be superseded by anything that is so sure and powerful in operation. But all the same, there's a great future ahead for the crystal."

"For receiving perhaps," said Bob. "But how about sending? You can't use the crystal for that."

"Even for sending," affirmed the doctor. "Have you heard of the crystodyne principle?"

"New one on me," replied Bob.

"It's new to a lot of people," said the doctor. "It means the employment of an oscillating crystal to replace the vacuum tube now in use. It's the invention of a Russian scientist, and it has received the approval and endorsement of some of the big guns in radio. A special form of crystal in a special arrangement is made to oscillate. You cannot only receive with it, but can generate and transmit radio waves—in other words, send messages with it."

"Just think of that!" exclaimed Jimmy. "And we've been looking down on the crystal as a sort of poor relation of the vacuum tube."

"But does it really work?" asked Joe, greatly interested.

"It actually does," was the reply. "Messages have been sent to a distance of nearly a mile by its use. Of course that isn't far, but the thing is in its infancy yet, and the principle is there. If you can send a message a mile, it won't be long before you can send it a thousand miles. You know that Marconi, when he started, could send only a few miles. You cannot only detect with the crystal, but you can amplify with it. You can use any number of them in various circuits in order to get distance, and before long we may be speaking of three- and six-crystal sets just as now we talk of a three- or six-tube set."

"Why, if that's so, it will revolutionize radio!" exclaimed Bob.

"Perhaps," replied the doctor. "But it may take years before it is perfected. And before it is perfected something may come along that is better still. There are as many revolutions in radio as there are in some South American countries," he added, with a laugh. "But now suppose we drop discussion for a while and listen in on my set. Would you like to?"

"Would we like to!" repeated Bob. "It's so long since I've heard a concert that I'm crazy for it."

"I'm hungry for it," declared Jimmy.

"You're always hungry for something," murmured Herb in a low tone, as they followed the doctor into his library where the set was installed.

"I haven't looked at the programs for tonight," said the doctor, as he tuned in. "But we'll get WEAF and see what's on the air."

A moment later the air seemed to be full of the twittering of birds. Then came the song of a mocking bird, the glorious melody rising and falling with a wonderful sweetness that held them enthralled.

The boys looked at each other in amazement and delight.

"Great Scott!" cried Bob, leaping to his feet. "That's Larry Bartlett!"

CHAPTER IV

CAUGHT IN THE ACT

"LARRY BARTLETT!" exclaimed Jimmy.

"Bet your life it's nobody else!" affirmed Joe emphatically. "There isn't any other bird imitator in the business that can warble like him."

"We'll have to get hold of Larry and bring him out here," declared Bob. "I'd give a lot to see him again and find out how he's getting along."

In the meantime, Doctor Dale had found the newspaper and looked up the program for WEAF.

"You boys are right," he said, after a moment's searching. "Here it is: 'Bird Imitations by Larry Bartlett.' He's better than ever, and that's saying a lot, for I thought the time I last heard him that he topped any one I ever listened to."

Larry Bartlett was a young vaudeville performer, whom the boys had rescued at Ocean Point when a rowboat in which he was enjoying

himself was run down by a stolen motorboat with the reckless thieves on board. A warm friendship had sprung up between Larry and the Radio Boys. Some time later, Larry was badly hurt in a fall of stage scenery.

The Radio Boys helped him through his illness and convalescence, and when he was well enough secured a hearing for him on the program of a broadcasting station. His very remarkable powers of bird imitation had been promptly recognized, and he had scored a great hit with the radio public.

His success had given him a keen interest in radio, and he soon afterward entered a radio school, where his ambition, combined with a natural aptitude, soon made him very proficient in the wonderful science. The boys had followed his career with the greatest interest, and the knowledge that they had helped him get his start was one of their pleasantest memories.

"We must get Larry out here and have a talk-fest over old times," remarked Joe.

"You said it!" rejoined Bob. "I'll write to him the first thing to-morrow and try to make a date."

The next announcement was a violin solo by a celebrated performer, and the boys settled back to enjoy it. Suddenly, on one of the crescendos, the music came to a sudden stop.

They looked at each other in surprise.

"What's that? Somebody horning in?" asked Joe, rather petulantly.

"Perhaps one of his strings snapped," suggested Jimmy.

Doctor Dale for a moment was as puzzled as the rest, but suddenly he sensed the reason.

"I'll tell you what I think it is," he said. "There's an S O S on the air."

"What has that got to do with it?" asked Herb, in some surprise.

"I don't quite get you," remarked Bob perplexedly.

"Whenever a distress signal comes in," explained the doctor, "it instantly has the right of way. At every radiocasting station there's a licensed code operator behind the scenes whose only duty, while the station is on the air, is to keep his ears open for distress signals. He has a receiving set that is tuned to six hundred meters, which, as you know, is the wave length of ship and coast stations. The instant he catches the signal he tells the engineer in charge of the broadcasting station, and whatever is going on stops on the instant, so that nothing may interfere with the free transmission of the S O S."

"I never knew that before," said Joe, "but it's a mighty good thing, if you ask me."

"You bet it is," chimed in Bob, as he remem-

bered the occasion when his own parents were on a sinking ship and he and his companions were trying frantically to get into wireless communication with them. "All the radio concerts in the world are not worth a single life."

"I had just such an experience a little while ago while I was listening in on WGY, the Schenectady station," remarked the doctor. "A dance program was going on when an S O S was picked up from a ship at sea and WGY got off the air at once. But while we're waiting I'll try to pick up Pittsburgh."

He got it without any difficulty, but there was a good deal of squeal that marred their pleasure in the orchestra selection that was going on.

"Lots of static," remarked the doctor, as he tried to tune out the discordant noises. "Guess there must be a thunderstorm brewing somewhere in that region."

"Old man Static is always on the job," said Jimmy, with a sigh of enforced resignation.

"You can count on him as surely as on death and taxes," affirmed Bob.

"The man who can eliminate static will surely make a fortune," observed the doctor. "Lots of them have tried, and, though they've been able to reduce the mischief it causes, they haven't yet traced the villain to his lair, so to speak."

"They're not even agreed on what causes it, are they?" asked Jimmy.

"Opinions differ," replied the doctor. "One theory that seems to have a lot to support it is that which was laid recently before the French Academy of Sciences. It was that the disturbances that drive some of us fans almost crazy are caused by the meeting of two banks, or fronts, of air, one a cold wave coming down from the polar banks, the other a front of tropical air either coming up from the south or merely lying over a certain area when the cold wave comes along. It isn't altogether a theory, for it has been tested by two years of very careful observation, all of which seem to back up the idea."

"But even if that is true, I don't see much nourishment in it," observed Jimmy with a grimace. "We can't stop the banks from meeting and raising a rumpus. Even Marconi couldn't do that."

"True enough," agreed the doctor. "But the first step in curing any trouble is to know what causes it. And we can trust our radio doctors sooner or later to find a remedy.

"That reminds me," he went on, "that what may prove a very important discovery was made recently while an experimenter was trying to do just that—find something that would cure or re-

duce the trouble from static. The whole thing started with a monkey wrench."

The boys grinned.

"I've heard of throwing a monkey wrench into the machinery," remarked Bob.

"Yes," laughed the doctor. "That's the bad kind of monkey wrench. The one I'm talking about is a good monkey wrench. You see this experimenter, who by the way is the richest radio fan in the world, was watching one of his men working on a static eliminator when suddenly the picture of a monkey wrench appeared on a screen. It startled him. He looked around, but there was no monkey wrench in the room. He searched everywhere and finally found it on a table in the broadcasting room attached to his plant. In some way, either by light waves or radio waves, the picture of it had been sent through the ether to the screen."

"As much of an accident as the apple that fell on Newton's head," interjected Bob.

"And from which Newton found out about the law of gravitation," resumed the doctor. "Exactly. This man and his assistants followed it up, and got to the point where a human figure could be transferred by radio waves to a celluloid plate. The features can be recognized, as well as the manner, dress and gait, and if the person

photographed walks about, his movements can be observed."

"Why, that means radio movies!" exclaimed Joe.

"Precisely," agreed Doctor Dale. "It wasn't long before the pictures could be projected almost half a mile, and it's probably only a matter of power to send them any distance. The time may come when a film picture that is being screened in California can be reproduced at practically the same instant in New York."

"The fellow that said the age of miracles was past didn't know what he was talking about," declared Bob.

"It would almost seem so," agreed the doctor, with a smile. "Radio has ushered in a whole flock of miracles, if you can call them such. Of course, in the strict sense, they're not miracles at all, for that implies the supernatural. All these things are in accordance with strictly natural laws. But we've been so ignorant of these laws that when we see their wonderful applications we're almost tempted to think that they're things of another world. But here I'm talking you boys to death, and we've clean forgot all about the concert," he added.

"I could listen to you all night," said Bob enthusiastically.

"Same here," agreed Jimmy. "I always feel when I go away from here that I've learned something worth while."

"I'm glad you feel that way," said the doctor. "And you know without my telling you that the latchstring always hangs outside the door."

They listened to two more selections, and then, as it was getting late, the boys bade the doctor good-night and went to their homes.

The next afternoon as they were returning from school they saw Buck Looker a little way ahead of them, accompanied as usual by Carl Lutz and Terence Mooney.

"The Three Graces," murmured Jimmy, in a tone of disgust.

"Scapegraces," corrected Herb.

"Disgraces," amended Joe.

How correctly Joe had characterized them was demonstrated by an incident that occurred a moment later.

As the three cronies reached the next corner, a boy of about fourteen came down the side street, propelling a pushcart in front of him. He was doing this with his left hand, as his right arm was partly paralyzed and hung helpless at his side.

Despite his misfortune, he had retained a cheerful disposition and was a favorite in the town. His crippled condition made it hard for

him to get employment, but he could push the light cart with one hand, and he used it in delivering parcels for several of the tradesmen of the town.

"Poor Tom Ilsley," murmured Bob, as he caught sight of him. "There's one boy who was behind the door when luck was handed out."

Buck Looker and his cronies reached the corner at almost the same time as Tom, and as the latter passed behind them one of the wheels of his cart brushed against Carl Lutz, causing him for a moment to lose his balance.

He staggered a little, recovered himself, and turned toward Tom with a face like a thundercloud.

"Why don't you look where you're going, you clown?" he snarled.

"I'm sorry," said Tom. "I didn't think I was passing so close."

"Hand him one, Carl," urged Buck, at the same time upsetting the cart and scattering the bundles into the gutter.

"Didn't think, eh?" sneered Lutz. "Well, here's something that will make you think next time," and he gave Tom a stinging slap in the face.

CHAPTER V

THE BULLY MEETS HIS MATCH

THE next instant Lutz went down on the sidewalk from a blow right between the eyes!

From the ground where he sprawled, Lutz looked up into the blazing eyes of Bob Layton, who towered above him.

"You low-down rat!" Bob gritted between his teeth. "To hit a cripple! Get up so that I can knock you down again."

The invitation was plain enough, but, somehow, Lutz did not seem very eager about accepting it. He got up on one knee, but stayed there whimpering and growling.

"I'll pay you for this," he quavered, looking about him for assistance.

"Pay me now," urged Bob. "I'm hungry to have you do it."

"Ain't you going to help me, Buck?" pleaded Lutz.

The first impulse of Looker and Mooney had been to run. But by this time the other Radio

Boys had gathered about them and made escape impossible. The only thing left to Buck was bluster. It had helped him get by on other occasions, and he hoped it would now.

"You leave him alone, Bob Layton, or I'll make you," he threatened, advancing with a menacing gesture but a sinking heart.

Into Joe Atwood's eyes came the joy of battle.

"So you want some, too!" he exclaimed, throwing off his coat. "Come right on and I'll oblige you. Bob's licked you so often that it's no novelty to him. Now it's my turn."

Buck's eyes wavered as they met the fire in Joe's. He halted in his tracks.

"Easy for you fellows to talk when you have four against three," he faltered.

"We'll soon settle that," replied Joe. "Herb and Jimmy, don't you pitch in, whatever happens. Just keep your eyes on Mooney and don't let the little sneak get away. We've got a little work for him to do later on."

Mooney's pale, furtive eyes grew big at this, but without paying any attention to him Joe turned to Buck.

"Now we're even," he said. "How about it? You seem to have some trouble about throwing off your coat. But perhaps you'd rather fight with it on?"

"I—I don't want to get arrested for fighting in

the street," Buck growled. "I'll meet you at some other place."

"You're yellow, Buck!" exclaimed Joe disgustedly. "Yellow clean through. Yellow as a buttercup! Yellow as a yellow dog!"

"Like this fellow here," said Bob, spurning Lutz with his foot. "Get up, Lutz, and take your medicine. Try to slap my face as you did Tom's."

"I've had enough," was Lutz's confession of defeat.

"No use," sighed Bob. "They're only good at fighting cripples. Stop that, Tom," he commanded, as he saw that Tom, his face one broad grin, was starting to pick up his scattered bundles. "Don't touch a thing."

"Why not?" asked Tom, in surprise.

"Because these fellows are going to pick them up for you," replied Bob. "They knocked them over. Get busy now," he commanded, turning to the discomfited trio.

"Not much I won't!" flared Buck.

"What's that?" asked Bob softly, advancing a few steps in the fellow's direction. "I'm a little hard of hearing, perhaps. Say that again."

Under the circumstances, Buck decided not to say it again, and Lutz and Mooney for their parts had no doubt that discretion was the better part of valor.

Scowling and growling, they picked up the packages and restored them to their place in the pushcart. Then they slunk away, the Radio Boys making no further effort to detain them.

"You haven't heard the last of this," snarled Buck, as he retreated.

"I suppose not," replied Bob. "You'll probably tell me the rest over the telephone, as you or some of your gang did the other night."

A startled look leaped into Buck's eyes.

"I don't know what you're talking about!" he exclaimed.

"Oh, yes, you do," returned Bob cheerfully. "Stick to the telephone, Buck. You're a mighty good long-distance fighter. I have to hand it to you."

Buck growled something in reply that they could not distinguish, and there was a general laugh on the part of the Radio Boys as they looked after the retreating forms.

"It was mighty good of you fellows to take my part," said Tom Ilsley gratefully, as he prepared to resume his journey.

"That's all right, Tom," said Bob kindly. "I'm glad that we happened to come along when we did. I'm sorry Lutz hit you, but I bet his face hurts worse than yours."

"I guess that's right," returned Tom, grinning.

Tom went on, and the Radio Boys resumed their homeward journey.

"It was fun to see the way Buck had to eat crow," chuckled Jimmy.

"He's had a pretty steady diet of it for some time now," laughed Joe. "He ought to be used to it."

"Let's think of something pleasanter to get the bad taste out of our mouths," suggested Bob. "What about you fellows coming round to my house to-night? I've got a little tinkering to do with my radio set, and you may help me."

Herb and Joe agreed on the instant, but Jimmy looked a little dubious.

"I kind of thought I'd take in a movie to-night," he said. "They've got a bully one down at the Cameo, 'The Demon Avenger.' Lots of shooting n'everything."

"Just as you like," said Bob carelessly. "It's baking day at our house," he added with apparent irrelevance.

Jimmy pricked up his ears at this. Mrs. Layton was famous for her cooking.

"Oh, well," he said, "I guess I'll let the movie go this time. I'd like to see what's the matter with your set. A fellow can't know too much about radio."

Bob grinned at Joe and Herb and turned in at his gate, while the others went on.

"I see you're busy at your set already," said Joe that evening, as, with Jimmy and Herb, whom he had picked up on the way, he came into the room at the Layton home where Bob was bending over his set. "What seems to be the matter with it? Tell old Doctor Atwood. He never fails."

"All right," laughed Bob. "Tell me what causes the fluttering in this set."

"M-mm," replied Joe, wholly ignorant of the causes, but assuming a solemn professional manner. "Fluttering? Ah, yes, fluttering! Am I correct, my dear sir, in assuming that you said fluttering?"

Herb made a pass at him, and Joe's dignity left him suddenly, as he ducked to avoid it.

"I think this doctor is a quack," said Bob, turning to Herb and Jimmy. "Perhaps you fellows can tell me what is wrong."

"You tell him, Razor, you're sharp," said Herb to Jimmy.

"You tell him, Garter, you've got the snap," said Jimmy to Herb.

"Now, fellows," laughed Bob, "cut out the wise cracks, and let's see if we can't get to the bottom of this. I want to get rid of this fluttering, for it bothers me when I'm trying to listen in. Let me show you what I mean. First I'll get WEAF."

He tuned in on the station in question and

happened to get a vocal selection. They caught it with tolerable clearness, but could easily note the fluttering sound that accompanied it.

"It is annoying, for a fact," said Herb.

"I spoke to Doctor Dale about it the other day," said Bob. "He told me that it might be caused by frequency variations or by intensity variations in the radio waves. In such cases we can't help it. But if neither one of those things is the trouble, he said that the cause must be in the set itself."

"But how are you going to find out?" asked Joe.

"The first thing he said to do," replied Bob, "was to try detuning the receiver, and that's what I'm going to do."

He turned one of his tuning knobs a little away from the position where the signals were heard loudest, but the fluttering still continued.

"That's a pretty good proof that the trouble is in the set itself, according to the doctor," said Bob. "But he said that to make sure it would be well to disconnect the antenna so as to cut out the signals altogether. Then if I still heard the noise, I could be reasonably sure that something in the audio frequency was wrong."

They followed this advice, and found that the noise still persisted.

"That settles it," said Bob with decision. "The

trouble is in the set itself, and I'm going to find it if I break a leg."

He did not have to resort to such heroic measures however, for after having hunted for the trouble in the amplifier circuit and the grid-leak, they finally found its source in the condenser used on the detector tube. A slight readjustment remedied the difficulty, and they were delighted on tuning in, this time on WGY, to find that the noise had vanished utterly.

Jimmy had turned his attention from radio and was sniffing the air suggestively.

"What's the matter, Jimmy?" asked Herb. "Got a cold?"

Jimmy deigned no reply, but kept on sniffing.

"Is it roses I smell?" he asked himself ruminatively. "No, it isn't roses. Something better than that. Is it new-mown hay? No, it isn't new-mown hay. Something better than that. What can it be? Oh, I know what it is!" he cried, his face brightening. "It's apple pie!"

Bob looked at him coldly.

"Guess again," he said unfeelingly. "There isn't a scrap of apple pie in the house."

Jimmy's face fell.

"Have I been the victim of misplaced confidence?" he moaned. "Didn't I hear you say this afternoon that this was baking day at your house?"

"That's what I said," admitted Bob.

"Well?" said Jimmy hopefully.

Bob kept a stony face, though the muscles of his mouth were twitching.

"And this is friendship," said Jimmy plaintively.

"Don't, Jimmy, you'll have me crying in a minute," put in Joe.

"A fellow," said Jimmy impressively, "that will invite another fellow to his house on baking day, and then is so dead to all the finer feelings that he doesn't let him sample what was baked is meaner than—meaner than——"

"Out with it, Jimmy," encouraged Herb.

"Meaner," declared Jimmy, "than the stingy man who went out in his back yard on Christmas Eve and fired off a shotgun, and then came in and told his kids that Santa Claus had committed suicide."

There was a roar of laughter from his hearers.

"Jimmy, old pal, forgive me!" exclaimed Bob. "There is no apple pie; but there's a peach pie in the pantry, and doughnuts and——"

"Say no more!" interrupted Jimmy, leaping to his feet. "Lead me to it—I mean to them."

Bob led the way, and the others crowded after him to the pantry, where they made havoc with the good things they found there until even

Jimmy agreed that the demands of hospitality had been more than met.

"Bet Jimmy won't want any breakfast after this feed," remarked Herb, as they separated for the night.

"You'll lose your bet," returned Joe, with a laugh. "To-morrow's a new day, and Jimmy has got to keep up his strength."

It was after eleven when his friends went, and as his father and mother had already retired Bob locked up the house, put out the lights, and was soon in bed, where he fell asleep promptly.

He seldom dreamed, but this night he had a dream that assumed the proportions of a nightmare. Again he was in the woods fighting fire with the flames closing in upon him, red fingers advancing to throttle him. Then, just as the agony of despair claimed him, he woke with a start and sat up in bed, a cold sweat breaking out all over him.

What was that?

Startled cries, hoarse shouts, hurrying footsteps, a tumult in the streets!

"Fire! Fire!"

CHAPTER VI

THE RED TERROR

Bob jumped from his bed and ran to the window.

The sky was red and growing momentarily redder, the crimson glow shadowed at times by great billows of smoke that rolled up and across it.

He threw up the window and leaned out. The streets were full of people running in one direction, and he heard the siren of a steam engine as it came plunging along at railroad speed.

"It's the school!" he heard one man shout. "The school's afire!"

Bob hurried on his clothes and rushed out of his room, meeting his parents in the hall.

"Oh!" cried Mrs. Layton, "hasn't poor Clintonia suffered enough? Is the town going to be burned again?"

"I guess not, Mother," replied Bob. "From what I hear it's the schoolhouse that's burning, and that stands in a big plot by itself, so there's

not much danger of anything else catching. Coming, Dad?"

"I'll be along as soon as I can get dressed," replied his father. "But don't wait for me if you're ready. Go right along."

Joe was just abreast of the gate as Bob came out, and it was not long before the two came upon Herb and Jimmy, who had got an earlier start.

"Must be a whopping big fire!" panted Joe, as the four boys wound in and out of the crowd, trying to reach the scene as soon as they could.

"Looks that way, from the red in the sky," assented Bob.

"I never went to school so fast as this before," gasped Jimmy, who was doing his best to make his short legs keep up with those of his companions.

"No, you've always made your best time getting away from it," chaffed Herb.

Before long the Radio Boys reached a point where they could see the high school. A pang shot through them as they saw that it was apparently doomed.

Great tongues of fire were leaping from the main body of the structure, though the wings were as yet untouched. But the flames were so fierce and had evidently gained such headway that it seemed as though it were only a matter

of time before the wings themselves would be consumed.

The three fire companies of the town were already on the scene, and messages had been sent for help to adjoining towns. The hose had already been attached to various hydrants and lay like long, writhing serpents of the ground, while great streams of water rushed from their nozzles and fell in hissing torrents on the flames.

It seemed as though the whole population of the town had gathered, for the square in which the school stood and the streets leading to it were thronged with people.

There was nothing that could be done by individuals, and they crowded as close to the fire lines as they could and watched the efforts of the firemen, who were working coolly and efficiently, doing all that could be done under the circumstances. But the fire had gained such a start before it was discovered that it seemed to be beyond control.

The Radio Boys secured a good vantage spot and watched the battle with enthralled interest. All of them dreaded fire. They had learned to dread it when they had fought it in the woods of Spruce Mountain, where it had been a matter of touch and go whether they would ever get out of those blazing woods alive. But there was a hideous fascination about it that kept their eyes

glued on the baleful efforts of their old foe to get the mastery.

"Seems as though all that water ought to do something," remarked Bob. "It must be going in there by tons."

"Might as well be that much oil, for all the good it seems to do," returned Joe gloomily.

"It's always that way at first," commented Herb. "But it's doing its work just the same, and pretty soon it will begin to tell."

"Looks as though there wouldn't be any school to-morrow," observed Jimmy, in a voice that he tried to keep sad, but which had in it a trace of satisfaction.

"Don't weep your eyes out over it," said Joe sarcastically. "Try to keep your grief under control, Jimmy."

"I am trying, but it's almost too much for me," replied Jimmy.

The classrooms in which the Radio Boys had most of their recitations were in the right wing, to which the flames had not yet spread.

"Do you think that wing will catch too?" asked Jimmy anxiously.

"Do you want it to?" asked Bob, looking at him suspiciously.

"Not a bit of it!" declared Jimmy stoutly. "I was just wondering."

A cheer arose from the crowd as two or three

of the rooms into which the streams had been pouring through the shattered windows grew perceptibly darker. It was the first indication that the firemen's efforts were beginning to be rewarded, and hope began to spring up that a large part of the building might yet be saved.

"I tell you what, Jimmy——" began Bob.

"Why, where's Jimmy?" he asked of the others, looking around blankly.

"I don't know," replied Joe, his eyes searching the crowd. "He was standing here just a minute ago."

"Probably saw some one in the crowd he wanted to speak to," conjectured Herb carelessly. "He'll be back before long."

But several minutes passed by and Jimmy had not returned. And that for a very good reason. He could not.

The mention of the wing in which his classroom lay had brought a sudden recollection to Jimmy's mind. There was something in that classroom that he wanted.

He was perfectly sure that if he spoke to his comrades about it they would laugh at him. Or, worse than that, they would try to stop him.

He felt sure there was no real danger. As far as he could see, the wing had not been invaded by the fire. And with the firemen getting the

upper hand, as they seemed to be doing, there was no likelihood that it would be.

The greater part of the crowd and the whole of the fire-fighting force were gathered in the front, where the flames were burning most fiercely. There was only a sprinkling of people on the further side.

And on that side was a door in the basement of the building that led to several successive flights of stairs, up which Jimmy had traveled hundreds of times, and which he could mount in the dark if need be. Anyway, there would be plenty of light shining through the windows from the fire. It would be but the work of a few minutes for him to go up those stairs and get what he wanted, and then come scurrying back.

He glanced at his comrades, saw that they were engrossed in watching the work of the firemen, and silently slipped away. He made a long detour, got around to the back and sauntered toward the basement door. Then, with a quick look behind to note whether or not he was observed, he passed quickly through the doorway and commenced to mount the first flight of stairs.

He had four flights to go before he reached the floor on which his classroom was located. Stair climbing was not the kind of exercise for which Jimmy was especially adapted, and he was blow-

ing a little before he had ascended two flights.

It was rather eerie work, too, owing to the darkness, which was relieved only by a dim, red, almost spectral light that in itself was menacing. And the smoke in the air and the crackling of the flames did not add to his comfort and peace of mind.

But he had gone so far now that he was determined to see the matter through, and he kept on, though with ever-growing uneasiness.

At last he reached his floor and hastily made his way to the door of his room. The knob yielded to his touch and he went in. He found his desk, reached inside, and with a feeling of exultation put his hand on the object he sought.

He put it carefully into the pocket of his coat and turned to leave the room.

At that moment there was a terrific roar, the wall between the wing and the main building gave way with a crash, and a burst of flame swept down the corridor.

A thrill of terror ran through Jimmy's veins. His first impulse was to make for the head of the stairs. But a wall of flame fanned by the back draught cut him off. His lungs and eyes would be seared before he could get through it.

He slammed the door shut, and for the moment was safe. Then he tried the doors at left and right leading into other classrooms in the

hope of finding some other way of exit. They were locked.

He was trapped!

He knew from the increased crackling that the flames were already attacking the door of the room in which he was. A few minutes more and they would eat their way through.

He rushed to the window. Although he had entered by the back door, his room lay on the side of the corridor facing the front.

He yelled with all his might, but in the din his voice could not be heard. Then he climbed to the sill. Clutching the frame as a support, he stood on the broad stone ledge outside the window.

Then they saw him!

Shouts of horror rose from the crowd.

"There's somebody up there!"

"He'll be killed!"

"Save him!"

"Don't jump!"

"Wait! We'll get you!"

The Radio Boys had looked with the rest. Suddenly a shout that was almost a shriek rose from Bob.

"It's Jimmy!"

"Jimmy!" groaned Joe and Herb in unison.

They made a rush for the building with no well-defined idea except to get to their comrade

somehow and save him from the terrible fate that menaced him. Before reaching there they were stopped by several firemen, who were already unwinding a heavy net from a rail of their apparatus.

The flames had broken through the door of the classroom now, and Jimmy's figure was clearly outlined against the flames behind him. The blistering heat was almost unbearable and his hand flinched from contact with the window frame.

The other Radio Boys were shaken with an agony of fear.

"Hold on, Jimmy! Hold on!" they yelled. "Don't jump!"

The firemen worked rapidly, and in another moment they had ranged themselves below the window with a dozen strong arms holding the sides of the net.

Then they roared up to him in chorus:

"Jump!"

There was an awful moment of suspense.

Then Jimmy jumped!

CHAPTER VII

A THRILLING RESCUE

JIMMY'S body came hurtling through the air, while the crowd held its breath and many of the spectators covered their faces with their hands, fearing that they were going to witness a tragedy.

It might easily have been that, for if Jimmy had missed the net even by an inch it would almost certainly have meant death.

Coming from such a height, though he struck the net almost in the center, it was with such terrific force that it was nearly torn from the hands that held it.

But the men kept their grip, and Jimmy, after rebounding once or twice, fell flat in the folds, which were gently lowered to the ground.

His three chums reached him first of the hundreds that rushed towards him to see if he were hurt. They raised him to his feet and fairly hugged him in their delight, talking and shouting incoherently, and only desisted when Doctor At-

wood pressed his way to the spot to see if his services would be needed.

But Jimmy, though pale and badly frightened, insisted that he was all right, and the doctor's examination confirmed this, to the infinite relief of the Radio Boys. Still, the doctor insisted that the place for Jimmy was bed, and sent Joe to get his car so that he could be taken home at once.

"You'll be as good as ever in a day or two, Jimmy," the doctor declared. "But you've had a bad shock to your nervous system and you've got to have rest and quiet."

Mr. Preston, the principal of the school, came up while the group was waiting for the car, and shook hands with Jimmy warmly.

"I can't tell you how glad I am that you came through all right, Jimmy," he said. "My heart turned a somersault when I saw you standing on that sill. How on earth did you happen to be up there on that floor?"

Jimmy looked rather embarrassed.

"I—I happened to think of something I had left in my desk, and I went up to get it," he replied.

"Something in your desk!" exclaimed Mr. Preston. "It must have been very precious for you to take such risks for it. What was it?"

"It—it was one of my books," faltered Jimmy.

"I thought a good deal of it and I didn't want to lose it."

Mr. Preston was thunderstruck. He had never credited Jimmy with scholarly tastes. In fact, his impressions were quite to the contrary. But what an injustice he had done the lad! Here he was, the only boy in the school who had thought enough of his books to risk his life to rescue one of them. It went to show how easily one might be mistaken.

"Jimmy," he said warmly, as he patted the boy on the shoulder, "I'm proud of you. That was a great thing to do. I only wish more of my boys had the same passion for learning. What was the book? Latin? Mathematics?"

But here Jimmy staggered a little and leaned heavily on Doctor Atwood, who hastily intervened.

"I guess we'd better get him home right away," he said. "Here's Joe with the car. The boy's been under a great strain, and he'll be in better shape to talk in a day or two."

He helped Jimmy into the car, and the other Radio Boys jumped in to take him home, where they delivered him to his parents, who were horror-stricken when they learned of his perilous adventure, and who hugged him, cried over him, and put him to bed.

Then Bob and his mates went back to the fire. A special train had pulled in during their absence, bringing two additional engines from a neighboring town, and with these reënforcements the fire was gradually being brought under control. It had been driven back from the wing to the main building, and once there, the many streams concentrated on it were winning the fight.

Again and again the flames flared up like retreating forces in a rear guard action, but were speedily subdued. Soon there were only isolated blazes, and these were put out one after the other until all that was left were the smoldering embers from which clouds of steam arose, attesting the victory of water over fire.

But it had been a hard-won victory, and the firemen were haggard and exhausted when at last they began to wind up their hose and get ready to depart, leaving only a few of their members to check any attempt of the fire to surge up again from the ruins.

Ruins they certainly were, for the damage had been extensive. One of the wings had been left uninjured, except for the water thrown on it as precaution. The other, in which Jimmy had been trapped, had suffered considerably, but the bulk of it was left intact.

It was the main structure that had suffered severely. The two upper floors had been com-

pletely gutted, and the lower floors were burned in part. The outer walls remained standing, but it seemed probable that they would have to be pulled down. Practically the whole central part would have to be rebuilt, while the wings were so damaged by water that it would be weeks before they could be put in usable shape.

The crowd gradually thinned out when it was seen that the fire was being mastered, and the Radio Boys were among the last to leave the scene and move homeward. They were too excited to think of sleep, and, anyway, the first streaks of dawn were beginning to show in the eastern sky.

Their minds were full of the fire, but still more so of Jimmy. They were all fond of him, and the danger he had run had stirred them to the depths. It was a deep satisfaction to them to know that he had escaped injury and in a day or two would be around with them again as though nothing had happened.

"Good old Jimmy!" remarked Joe, as the trio halted in front of his gate.

"It sure has been a Jimmy night," said Bob. "He's been in the limelight for once in his life anyway."

"In the firelight, you mean," laughed Herb.

"I'm still trying to figure out why on earth he went up there," mused Bob.

"You heard what he said to Mr. Preston," said

Herb. "He went up there to get one of his books. Preston was tickled to death to think that Jimmy was so keen for learning, so attached to his lessons."

Bob looked at Herb. Herb looked at Joe. Joe looked at Bob.

They did not want to laugh. It seemed unfair to Jimmy when he was not present. He had been crowned with a halo. It seemed unkind to remove it.

Still, they knew Jimmy.

The muscles of Bob's mouth twitched. He tried to repress them. They only twitched the harder. Joe's lips quivered. Herb stared off into the distance.

All of a sudden their gravity gave way, and they broke into a roar of uncontrollable laughter.

They laughed until the tears ran out of their eyes and they were forced to stop from utter exhaustion.

"Hold me up, somebody!" gasped Joe. "I'm as weak as a rag."

"Jimmy!" choked Herb. "Jimmy, as a scholar! Jimmy in love with learning! Jimmy risking his life for a school book! Oh, it's too much!"

"But, after all, there's a mystery about it," panted Bob, wiping his eyes. "Jimmy certainly said he went up there for one of his books. He wouldn't tell an untruth about it."

"It is queer," admitted Joe.

"But we'll find out," declared Bob. "Jimmy is too good a scout to keep anything from us. He won't get faint when we ask him about it, as he seemed to do when Mr. Preston was questioning him."

"Faint!" repeated Herb, and again they laughed.

At all the breakfast tables in Clintonia that morning the fire was of course the chief subject of conversation. The leading newspaper had printed a special edition, including interviews with Mr. Preston and leading members of the school board. There had been a general agreement that school would have to be suspended for several months while the damage was being repaired.

The paper had spread itself in its description of the fire, laying stress on the exciting scenes attending it and giving a great deal of space to the dramatic feature of Jimmy Plummer's plight and rescue.

But his chums looked in vain for any statement of the reason why Jimmy had gone to his classroom. Mr. Preston had been vague on that subject when it came to talking with the reporter. It seemed that some of his enthusiasm over Jimmy's noble devotion to literature had ebbed away. A sober second thought had made him

cautious about committing himself. He had evidently adopted the policy of "watchful waiting."

The three Radio Boys would have liked to go round to Jimmy's house immediately after breakfast, but they felt that he would probably need rest and quiet and be in no condition to receive visitors. They telephoned to the house, however, and were glad to learn that everything was going well and that it would be all right to call on the following day.

The next afternoon they loaded themselves with oranges and other dainties and went to their comrade's home. They found him up and around and apparently none the worse for his adventure. And their last misgivings vanished when they learned that his appetite had not been affected in the least by the trying experience he had gone through.

He received them joyfully.

"Tickled to death to have you fellows come," he said, as they filed into his room, and his face grew still brighter when he saw the offerings they had brought with them, one of which he proceeded to sample immediately.

"That was a close squeak you had, old boy," remarked Bob, as he flung his cap on the lounge and sank down into one of the chairs.

"I tell you we almost had heart failure when we saw you on that ledge," said Joe.

"I was scared to death for fear the net would break when you jumped into it," observed Herb.

Jimmy looked at him a little suspiciously.

"I was scared to think that I mightn't hit it," he answered. "I tell you that was one awful minute when I felt myself in the air and didn't know where I was going to bring up."

"I suppose you've seen the papers," observed Bob. "They're full of your experience. You're the boy hero of Clintonia."

But Jimmy seemed to be peeved at his new-found fame.

"They're too full of it," he said fretfully. "I wish they'd cut it out. A reporter's been here two or three times to get me to tell him why I was up there."

There was dead silence for a moment.

"Yes, go on," said Bob at last.

"Go on with what?" asked Jimmy.

"The story of why you were up there," replied Bob, with a glance at his companions.

Jimmy fidgeted about a little.

"Come now," urged Bob. "Honest confession is good for the soul. Tell your old pals about it. You know it won't go any further."

"You heard what I told Mr. Preston," Jimmy said. "I went up there to get one of my books."

"Yes, I heard that," replied Bob. "I noticed, too, that you staggered and seemed to grow faint

when Mr. Preston asked you what book it was. You don't feel faint now, do you?"

Jimmy looked around at his friends, and a slow grin spread over his face.

"Shut that door, Herb," he directed.

Herb complied with alacrity.

"Now," said Jimmy, "will you fellows cross your heart and hope to die if you ever breathe a word to any living soul?"

They would and did.

Jimmy went over to the closet and got his coat. He drew from the pocket a paper-covered book, much thumbed and dog-eared, with a lurid illustration on the cover. He handed it to Bob, who seized it eagerly while Joe and Herb crowded up to him and looked over his shoulder.

There was a moment of stupefaction and then they burst into laughter. The book bore the title: "Tackling the Pirates; or, The Bloodthirsty Rovers of the Spanish Main."

CHAPTER VIII

UNCLE LON APPEARS

THE revelation was so unexpected and it formed such a ludicrous anti-climax to what might have been a tragedy, that it struck Jimmy's chums as unspeakably comic. They laughed. They roared. They pounded each other on the back.

"Tackling the Pirates!" gurgled Bob.

"Bloodthirsty Rovers!" chuckled Joe.

"Jimmy's passion for learning!" gasped Herb, going off into another convulsion of laughter.

Jimmy himself showed one broad grin as he looked at his uproarious mates.

"Go ahead and laugh," he said. "I don't mind. You'll all be borrowing the book to read it yourselves."

"That's all right," said Joe, as soon as he had recovered his breath. "But what gets me is that you should have risked your life to get it."

"You don't suppose I thought I was risking my life, do you?" asked Jimmy. "Of course, I

wouldn't have gone if I'd thought I was going to get trapped that way. Nine times out of ten I'd have got away with it. It was just my bad luck that the fire burst through just then. Another minute and I'd have been on the stairs."

"But what were you doing with a story book in the classroom, anyway?" asked Bob, with virtuous sternness. "Don't you know that it's against the rules and that it would have been nabbed if the teacher had caught you with it? Jimmy, I'm surprised at you."

Jimmy grinned.

"It's a peach of a story," he said. "I'd got about half through it, and I didn't want to miss the rest. I'd just got to the place where Zinc-Tooth—he's the pirate chief, you know—was going to make the lovely Lady Celestina walk the plank. There were sharks swimming all around too, and Zinc-Tooth was grinning something awful. I knew he'd get balked somehow, for I'd looked at the last page and had seen that Lady Celestina married the hero. But I wanted to find out how she got out of walking the plank and how Zinc-Tooth got foiled. I'd have hated to lose the book, and I thought I'd make sure of getting it before the fire reached the wing."

"You got it all right," admitted Bob. "But you came near paying a mighty big price for it."

"I don't know whether I've got through paying

for it yet," said Jimmy, with a troubled air. "Suppose Mr. Preston asks me again about it?"

"If he does, you'll have to make a clean breast of it," said Joe. "He has a sense of humor, and maybe he'll laugh himself. But I don't think he'll say any more about it. You can see by the things he failed to say in the papers that he's been thinking it over. He's probably sorry now that he congratulated you on your love for your school books. He won't want to make himself ridiculous, and he'll probably say nothing more about it. He'll let a sleeping dog lie—not saying you're a dog, Jimmy."

"How about the reporters?" asked Jimmy.

"Dodge 'em for a day or two more, and they'll then have something else to think about," advised Herb. "If they do grab you, do the shrinking violet stunt; tell them you've had too much publicity already and that you refuse to talk any more about the matter. By the way, if you're through with that pirate story lend it to me."

"I haven't finished it yet," replied Jimmy. "Just as soon as I do you can have it."

His friends stayed a little while longer and then left Jimmy to his oranges, which had already sensibly diminished in number.

When Bob entered his front hall he noticed a big slouch hat on the rack and knew that his parents had a caller.

The sound of voices came from the living room, and he entered to find his mother and father talking with their visitor. He was a tall, gaunt man, slightly stoop-shouldered, with a shrewd, weather-beaten face and kindly eyes, whom Bob liked on sight.

"This is Uncle Lon Owens," his mother introduced the newcomer. "You've heard me speak of him a good many times, though you haven't seen him since you were a baby, and of course don't remember him. Uncle Lon, this is my son, Bob."

Uncle Lon lifted his lanky length from the chair and shook hands warmly.

"So this is Bob," he said. "Last time I saw him he wasn't knee-high to a grasshopper. Beats all how these youngsters grow up. He's almost as tall as his father this minute."

"And how are things up at Horseshoe Valley, Uncle Lon," asked Bob, as he took a seat after this greeting.

"Purty fair," was the reply. "Had a purty good year with the crops. Have been down to the city makin' arrangements to sell some cattle, and thought I'd run up here for a spell to see the folks before I lit out for home. Seems I come at a purty excitin' time too. The folks have just been tellin' me of the fire last night. Schoolhouse burned down, they say."

"It was a pretty bad fire," returned Bob. "It'll be a good while before school starts again."

"And I suppose you ain't breakin' your heart about that," remarked Uncle Lon, with a genial smile. "Youngsters in my day would have seen the hand of Providence in a fire that burned down the school."

"Oh, I guess I can bear up under it," replied Bob, with a laugh. "I was planning to build a new radio set, and this will give me time to do it."

"Your folks were tellin' me that you were all interest over this radio thing," said the visitor. "Say you think more of it than you do of your victuals."

"Oh, I wouldn't go as far as that," laughed Bob. "Though I do think that it's the greatest thing that ever happened. Have you got a radio set?"

"No, I haven't," was the reply. "Some of the folks out our way have 'em, but ma and I haven't got to it yet. I've heard 'em—they had a fine one at the county fair—and like 'em fine. Shouldn't wonder if I'd get one some time. Kind of liven the old farm up on winter evenin's."

"It sure would," replied Bob enthusiastically. "You once try it, and you'll wonder how you ever got along without it."

"I suppose so," agreed Mr. Owens. "I've been kind of leary about it though for fear it might set fire to somethin'."

"Needn't worry about that," replied Bob confidently. "You could have a lightning arrester attached to it that would prevent any danger."

Just then the call came to supper, and they sat down to an enjoyable meal during which Bob's liking and respect for his uncle grew stronger. He was intelligent and well-informed, and on his remote farm had kept himself well-posted on current events. He had a vein of homely humor, too, that made him a pleasant and interesting companion.

"I'm going to have some friends of mine around to-night, Uncle Lon," said Bob, as they rose from the table. "We're going to listen in on a radio concert, and I'd like to have you take it in too, if you care for it."

"Nothin' would suit me better," said Mr. Owens cordially. "The concert would suit me fine, and I always like to have a lot of young folks around me. But I don't see any set?" he added, as his eyes roved about the living room, to which they had adjourned.

"I keep it in my room," said Bob. "Suppose you come right up there now and take a look at it."

Nothing loth, Uncle Lon followed.

"It's a fine lookin' set," he said, as his eyes fell on it. "That must have cost a heap of money. I saw one a little while ago that didn't look as good, and the feller told me he'd paid five hundred dollars for it."

"I suppose this would cost fully that, and probably more, if I went to buy it," replied Bob, as he touched the set caressingly. "But as it is it cost me hardly anything except the work I put into it."

"You don't mean to say that you made this all yourself!" exclaimed Uncle Lon, in surprise.

"Every bit of it," asserted Bob. "And I'm planning to make a better and bigger one yet, one with seven tubes. Now that there won't be any school for a while, I'm going tc pitch right into it."

Mr. Owens' respect for Bob had visibly increased at sight of his handiwork, and it grew still greater as Bob went over the array of dials and explained to his uncle the function of each. Some of his explanations, especially where technicalities were concerned, went over Uncle Lon's head, but his questions were intelligent and before long he had a pretty fair idea of how the for instance."

The ringing of the doorbell broke in on the discussion, and Bob excused himself, to return a moment later with Joe, Herb and Jimmy, the

latter having persuaded his parents to let him join the others, which they did with some misgivings and with an injunction to be home early.

Bob introduced his friends to the visitor, and the geniality and friendliness of Uncle Lon made the boys like him at once.

"Now, Uncle Lon," said Bob, after they were all seated, "you're our guest to-night, and you're going to pick out on the programs just what you like."

"That's mighty good of you," said Mr. Owens. "But you said programs. How many have you got?"

"Oh, about twenty or so," replied Bob, handing him a pile of clippings from the paper. "You can have selections from New York, from Pittsburgh, Detroit, Chicago——"

"Chicago!" ejaculated Uncle Lon, opening his eyes wide. "Do you mean to say you can hear what's going on there? Why, that's a thousand miles away!"

"We can go more than twice as far as that if you want to," replied Bob. "We can hear Denver as easily as we can New York. And if the little United States isn't enough for you, we can go outside of it, listen in on Havana or New Zealand, for instance."

"Well, I swan!" ejaculated Uncle Lon. "I'm

all flabbergasted. I didn't think you had any such range as that with a homemade set."

"The proof of the pudding is in the eating," laughed Bob. "Pick out your selection now, and I'll give it to you before you can say Jack Robinson."

With a slight tinge of incredulity still persisting, Uncle Lon called for an organ recital from Pittsburgh, and a moment later the mellow music of "Traumerei" held them under its magic spell.

Uncle Lon listened as though in a trance until the last note had died away.

They called up Memphis and secured a quartette rendition of "My Old Kentucky Home." Then they tuned in on Detroit and had a lively jazz selection that set Uncle Lon's feet to jigging. Havana chimed in with the Toreador's song from "Carmen." From Chicago, Sousa's Band burst into a magnificent march. Then came a comic dialogue by a couple of New York comedians that sent them all into convulsions of laughter.

So one number succeeded another, to the pleasure of the boys and the infinite delight of Uncle Lon, who was in the seventh heaven. He had never dreamed that such possibilities were locked up in the radio. He was visibly renewing his youth. His eyes twinkled, his face was one broad substantial smile. At last, when stirred by

an especially jazzy bit from a minstrel show, he jumped to his feet and gave an exhibition of buck and wing dancing that the boys would not have believed possible in a man of his age.

"Uncle Lon, you're all right!" cried Bob, as their visitor sank breathless into his chair while the lads applauded enthusiastically. "Fellows, who's all right?"

"Uncle Lon's all right!" they shouted in chorus.

"You sure do shake a mean foot, Uncle Lon," laughed Bob.

"Oh, I don't know," said Mr. Owens, a little sheepishly, as he wiped his brow with a big bandanna. "I don't know what your pa and ma would have said if they'd seen me. But somehow when I get with you youngsters I'm just as much of a kid as you are.

"I tell you what," he said. "I want you boys to come and pay me a visit at Horseshoe Valley and bring your radio sets along. There's lots of room and plenty to eat, and it would do ma and me a lot of good.

"What do you say, boys? Will you come?"

CHAPTER IX

THE FLY IN THE OINTMENT

"WILL we come?" exclaimed Bob.

"Will a duck swim?" chimed in Jimmy.

"You bet we'll come!" affirmed Joe.

"We'll be there with bells on," declared Herb.

"That is, of course, Uncle Lon," modified Bob, as an afterthought, "if our folks are willing."

"That goes without saying," replied Mr. Owens.

"I'm sure they won't object," said Joe. "There's really no reason why we shouldn't, as long as the school is closed."

"I know I can talk my folks over," asserted Herb.

"Same here," declared Jimmy. "My folks have always let me go anywhere where they knew we four fellows were going to be together."

"That will be great," declared Uncle Lon warmly. "See your folks about it as soon as you can and let me know. I'll be goin' away to-morrow, but you can arrange everything with

Bob and he can write me. I'll meet you at the station when you come. I can promise you the finest kind of time. It's a fine country, and you can go hiking and nutting and fishing and swimming and all sorts of things. And I know ma will be just as glad as I'll be to have you youngsters around puttin' a little life and fun into the old place."

As they had anticipated, the boys found very little difficulty in obtaining the consent of their parents. There was really no reason why they should not go under present school conditions, and they knew that at Mr. Owens' farm the lads would be under good and wholesome influences.

So everything was settled to their satisfaction, and Bob wrote to Uncle Lon, setting a date a week ahead for their arrival at Bottville, the nearest railroad station to Horseshoe Valley. He received a prompt and cordial reply from his uncle, telling him that his wife was quite as delighted at the prospect of their visit as he was himself and was impatiently awaiting their coming.

"If there's anything in a name we ought to have plenty of good luck at Horseshoe Valley," remarked Herb, with a laugh.

"I'll bet we shall," returned Bob. "I have a hunch that we're going to have plenty of adventure too."

"Uncle Lon promised us plenty of good eats," Jimmy reminded them, as he rubbed his stomach ruminatively.

"And he'll keep his word," returned Bob. "Mother says his wife is one of the best cooks in that district and that she's often taken prizes at the county fair."

"Looks as though we'd fallen in soft," chuckled Jimmy. "A week's a long time to wait, Bob."

"It'll pass more quickly if you fellows will help me put my new superheterodyne together," declared Bob. "I want that all in shape by the time we start. Uncle Lon will get a real treat when he listens in on that."

"Got all the stuff you need?" asked Joe.

"Just about," was the reply. "And there isn't anything I want that Dave Slocum hasn't in stock. So suppose all you fellows come around to-night and help assemble it."

The three lads promised to be on hand and kept their word. All worked like beavers, and their work was made the easier because of their keen interest in the type that Bob had chosen for his new set.

"I've fought a little shy of supers, because they're so complicated and hard to set up," remarked Joe.

"This one has an advantage there," replied

Bob. "The leads are short and the wiring is simple."

"You say you have seven tubes," remarked Herb. "I thought the average superheterodyne had eight."

"So it does," agreed Bob. "But in this special type only seven are needed to fill the bill. Here they are. There's the oscillator, the first detector, first radio, second radio, second detector, first audio and second audio."

"Where's your potentiometer?" asked Jimmy.

"You don't need it in this set," was the reply. "There's just as much stability in the radio frequency circuit as there is in the audio frequency. The parts work together so well that you don't need a separate control for the oscillator. Now this is the way the thing works. The oscillator generates a frequency that will cause a beat with the signal that comes in. The first detector rectifies the beat a trifle and then the signal is passed into the tuned radio frequency transformer. Then the signal is amplified and passes to the second radio frequency transformer from which it enters the detector which is rectified to frequencies that the ear can hear. After this it passes in order to the first and second stages of audio frequency, each of which amplifies it. And there you are."

"Sounds simple when you say it quick," remarked Herb.

"Now, as you notice," said Bob, "this super has been furnished to me complete except for the cabinet. The panel and the sub-panel are drilled and engraved, so that all we need to assemble the set are a screwdriver and a pair of pliers."

With diagrams for mounting and wiring, they set to work. One after the other the condensers, choke coil, oscillator coil, terminal bolts, brackets, rheostats, jacks and switches found their proper places. Then came the wiring, which required especial time and care in order that everything should be just right.

More than one night's work was necessary before the Radio Boys could call the job complete, but when at last the set was finished and Bob, with something of a palpitation of the heart, tuned in on various stations, his delight knew no bounds at the results he received.

At last he had his heart's desire, a set that represented the best in radio. Such power, such clearness he had dreamed of sometimes, but this had been the first time he had really achieved it.

"Guess this will make Uncle Lon sit up and take notice," he remarked exultantly. "If he liked the old one so much, what will he think of this?"

"It's the bee's knees, all right," affirmed Jimmy. "If Uncle Lon starts any of his buck and wing dancing to this music, he'll never know when to stop."

The days flew by rapidly, the more so as they had a good deal to do in getting outfits and supplies of various kinds for their projected trip.

"Going to take Hector along?" asked Bob.

"Sure thing," replied Jimmy. "The poor fellow would grieve himself sick if I went away without him. You don't suppose Uncle Lon will mind, do you?"

"Not a bit," Bob assured him. "A dog more or less on a farm won't make any difference."

The day before they were to start, Bob, Jimmy and Herb were together when Joe burst in upon them, evidently primed with news.

"What do you think, fellows?" he began breathlessly.

"Whom are you speaking to?" asked Bob. "If you're talking to Jimmy—he never thinks."

Jimmy looked around for something to throw at him.

"Cut out the kidding," remonstrated Joe. "This is serious."

"Who's dead?" asked Herb flippantly.

Joe glowered at him.

"Such a bunch of comedians," he said disgustedly. "I'm glad now I've got bad news to tell

you. Buck Looker and Carl Lutz are going to Horseshoe Valley!"

The other boys started as though from a galvanic shock.

"Buck Looker!" they exclaimed in one breath.

"That got you, did it?" said Joe grimly. "Now be funny over that. See if you find that a laughing matter."

"That is bad news, for a fact," said Bob soberly. "Are you sure it's a fact? Where did you get it?"

"Buck's father spoke of it to Dave Slocum, and Dave told it to me," replied Joe gloomily. "I guess it's straight goods, all right."

"There seems to be a fate in it, the way we get mixed up with those fellows," mused Bob. "We ran across them at Ocean Point, in the Big Woods and at Mountain Pass. Ran across them. But if they try to play any of their dirty tricks on us at Horseshoe Valley, we'll do more than that."

"What, for instance?" asked Joe.

"Run over them," said Bob grimly.

"Well, we've done that before and I guess we can again," said Joe. "Somehow their schemes always seem to slip a cog."

CHAPTER X

OFF FOR HORSESHOE VALLEY

"WHAT time does the train for Horseshoe Valley start in the morning, Bob," asked Joe, after a little more talk about Buck Looker and his cronies.

"Eleven o'clock," replied Bob, with a glance at the time-table to make sure.

"Good enough," said Jimmy. "That will give me plenty of time for my beauty sleep."

It was a hilarious crowd that wended its way to the station the next morning, and Hector was not the least joyous of the group. His spirits suffered a sudden decline, however, when he was put in the baggage car and left there with the trunks, while the Radio Boys went to a passenger coach, where after a scramble for the window positions, which Joe and Jimmy won, they settled themselves comfortably for the trip.

The nearest town to Uncle Lon's farm was Bottville, which they had expected to reach about the middle of the afternoon. A blocked track

delayed them, however, and it was nearing sundown when the trainman called out the name of their destination.

"All out, fellows," said Bob, as he rose and stretched himself. "Let's go and get Hector and the radio set and take a squint at Bottville."

A few moments later they were standing on the long platform with all their baggage about them, while Hector capered up and down, wild with delight at being released from the confinement of the baggage car.

They looked about in all directions for Uncle Lon, but he was nowhere in sight.

"Never mind," said Bob. "When he found the train was going to be late he probably went about some errand. He'll be back before long. I'd propose taking a walk about the streets, only I'm afraid of leaving the radio outfit here."

"You fellows go ahead and take your walk," said Jimmy. "I'll stay here and keep an eye on the stuff. I guess you fellows never will learn how to loaf."

"One loafer in the bunch is enough," remarked Joe. "Anyway, we could never reach your high standard. You can do enough loafing for all of us, Doughnuts."

Jimmy did not reply to this sally. Not but what he would usually have been there with a comeback. But just now there was a dreamy,

faraway look in his eyes that made Joe think he had not heard him.

Jimmy had heard all right, but something far more important engrossed his attention. Wafted on the crisp air had come the odor of frying doughnuts, far sweeter to his nostrils than the perfumes of Araby the blest. He sniffed the air and sniffed again, until with almost the trained instinct of a hound he had located the source of the aroma in an owl lunch wagon, standing in a vacant lot close by.

Jimmy believed in prompt decision where food was concerned, and in a twinkling he had secured a half dozen of the doughnuts, which he was glad to find tasted as good as they smelled.

The first person he saw on his return to the platform was Uncle Lon, who was peering anxiously about in search of his expected guests. His face lighted up as he caught sight of Jimmy.

"Hello there, young feller," he said, "how are you? Where are the rest of the boys? I was beginnin' to think that you must have missed the train."

"They're round somewhere," replied Jimmy, as he shook the hand extended to him. "They've gone to take a look at the town. They'll be back any minute. While you're waiting, won't you have a doughnut, Uncle Lon?" and he extended the bag.

"Don't care if I do," was the reply, and he munched one with a zest that aroused Jimmy's admiration. Here was a man after his own heart. He could not quite keep up to Jimmy, but he ran him a close second, and by the time the other Radio Boys got back the last of the doughnuts had disappeared.

Uncle Lon greeted the wanderers with a warmth that made them feel at home at once, and then led the way to his automobile that was standing at the end of the platform. It was not a new model and showed signs of hard usage, but it was of a good make and capacious, though by the time the boys had tossed their bags inside—Uncle Lon had said that he would send a wagon for the trunks the next day—and stowed away their radio sets, they found themselves pressed for room. So Hector had to stand on the running board, while Herb kept his hand on the dog's collar to prevent his being shaken off.

In this manner they drove the seven or eight miles to Uncle Lon's farm. The road was narrow and hilly, and the boys had plenty of time to note the character of the country through which they were passing.

The valley was a natural basin, surrounded by hills that in places rose almost to the dignity of mountains. The lowlands had probably at one time been the bed of a big lake. The waters

covering it had for the most part disappeared leaving it a rich farming area.

The river that had at one time run through it was now dammed at one end of the valley and furnished the water supply for a large range of surrounding territory. Before the dam had been built, the river had been a frequent cause of great damage, often overflowing its banks, inundating the plains, and causing great losses in horses and cattle.

The dam had obviated this trouble, but had substituted a new fear in its stead lest at some time it should give way and cause a flood compared with which all that had preceded would seem as nothing.

"Right good bit of money spent in buildin' that dam," Uncle Lon explained, "but there was a lot of politics mixed up with the contracts, an' we ain't any too sure that it was built just right. There was talk that there was a good deal of substitutin' of cheap material instead of what the contract called for and a consid'able bit of scampin' on the work itself. Still it ain't broke loose yet, and maybe it won't. I suppose there ain't any use in worryin' about it."

"That looks like a river over there," remarked Bob, pointing to the right where he could see water glinting under the last rays of the setting sun.

"That's a creek," said Uncle Lon. "It broadens out and gets bigger down near Bottville. It's fed by some streams up in the hills. Sometimes it goes on a rampage, but not so often as the river used to."

He pointed out other things of interest as they went along, but most of the time he was too busy driving the car to do much talking. The boys were content to sit back and view the scenery and inhale the invigorating air that came from the hills.

Jimmy, who was wedged in between two suitcases on the floor of the tonneau, would have gone to sleep if the others had let him, in spite of the jolting of the car over the uneven road. But this they would not allow.

"No chance for you to get to sleep this time, Jimmy," declared Joe. "It's too hard to get you awake again. Buck up and keep your eyes open. Don't you want to see where you're going?"

"Yes—I don't," grumbled Jimmy. "What difference does it make to you if I go to sleep? It doesn't take any feathers off your old hen, does it? I'm not kicking if you want to stay awake, am I? If you'd eaten as many doughnuts as I have, you'd be sleepy too."

"There's somethin' in what he says," remarked Uncle Lon, with a grin. "He certainly did eat a powerful sight of doughnuts, and that's a fact.

Guess he must have a natural gift that way."

"You're right there, Uncle Lon," laughed Bob.

After going about two miles further, Mr. Owens pointed out a comfortable-looking rambling farmhouse set on the crest of a slight elevation.

"That's our house," he said, with a note of pride in his voice. "Nothin' fancy, but I guess we can make you comfortable and give you enough to eat."

A few minutes later the car drew up alongside the house, and the Radio Boys were greeted by Mrs. Owens, an ample, pleasant-faced woman, who welcomed them all heartily and made them feel at home at once.

Hector received a much less cordial greeting from the farm dogs, who circled warily about him and seemed prepared to open hostilities at a minute's notice. He was so anxious to be friends, however, and Uncle Lon warned them so sharply, that they soon accepted the stranger on peaceable terms and took him off with them to be initiated into the mysteries of the barnyard and stables.

Meantime the boys had been shown to their rooms, from which they came out with alacrity when the supperbell rang. All were soon assembled about the big kitchen table, where a meal was served that did credit to Mrs. Owens' cooking.

That night the boys slept like tops, wearied

out with the day's travel. Bob was the first up in the morning, and when the others came down he had already made a discovery.

"I've found a swell place to stretch our antenna for the radio set, fellows," he announced. "There's a beam projecting from the big barn back of the house that's used for lifting hay up into the mow. We can hook one end of the aerial to that and the other to the house. Must have been made to order for us."

"Fine!" exclaimed Joe. "Let's go up into the barn and look it over."

This suited the others, and they were soon inside the big rambling old building.

A ladder led from the first floor to a loft, and the boys started up this with Bob in the lead.

"Tramp, tramp, tramp, the boys are climbing," sang out Joe, who was in the highest of spirits.

Bob had just stepped to the floor of the loft, followed by Herb and Joe, when they heard a loud crash and shout from below. Then followed a dead silence.

The boys looked at each other in consternation.

CHAPTER XI

DOWN THE WELL

Bob made a dash for the ladder, followed closely by Joe and Herb. As they reached the ground floor, a glance sufficed to tell them what had happened.

Not far from the foot of the ladder was a gaping hole in the floor, with splintered ends of planks jutting out over it. Under the floor at this point was an old and deep disused well. The planks above it had become rotted from the damp, and Jimmy's heavy weight had caused them to give way, letting him down the shaft so suddenly that he had only had time to utter the one startled shout before he disappeared.

The boys rushed to the edge of the opening and peered down. They could see nothing, but far down they could hear a faint splashing and sputtering.

"Jimmy! Jimmy!" shouted Herb. "Can you hear me, old boy?"

There was an answering shout from below, and

the lads above breathed a great sigh of relief, for while they could not make out what he said, it showed that he had not been stunned by the fall, but was still conscious.

But they realized that his plight was desperate, and their hearts were filled with wild alarm as they cast their eyes about for the quickest means of rescuing him.

Fortunately, there was a coil of rope hanging over a wooden peg set in the barn wall, and Bob made a dive for this, forming a bowline knot on the end as he returned. This he slipped around him under the arms, and gave the other end to Joe and Herb.

"I'll go down and get this rope around Jimmy," he said. "When you feel two jerks on it, pull away for all you're worth. After you get Jimmy up, you can let the rope down again to me."

Both Herb and Joe volunteered to go down, but Bob would not listen to this, so they lowered him carefully over the edge, bracing themselves against his weight and trying to keep the rope from chafing on the ragged edges of the planks.

Inside the well it was as black as midnight, but Bob had a box of matches, and by their tiny flame he could see the rough stones, covered with thick green moss. Peering downward, he could see nothing beyond a few feet, but whenever he shouted he got an answer from Jimmy, and in

a short time he could make out the water-soaked form of his friend.

He found poor Jimmy in a sorry plight. The moss-covered stones were so slippery that it was impossible to get a grip on them. The water was deep and cold, and every time the unfortunate boy's fingers slipped from the slimy surface of the stones he was plunged back into the icy bath, only to come up sputtering and blowing, to dig his fingers into some slippery crevice and hold on as long as possible.

This could not be kept up for long, however, and Jimmy was weakening fast when Bob reached him. He was just about to slip back into the water again when Bob grasped him by the arm.

"Do you think you can hold on to the rope while I get this loop under your arms?" asked Bob.

"I g-guess I c-can," said Jimmy, through chattering teeth. "B-but what will you d-do without the rope?"

Bob had already mentally answered that question. He was prepared if necessary to take Jimmy's place in the icy water until Joe and Herb could pull his companion up and lower the rope again. But naturally he did not want to do this if there was any way to avoid it.

By the light of his matches, he had noted, about three feet above the surface of the water, a big

rock, larger than most of the stones in the wall, which projected several inches into the well.

"Don't worry about me," he said, in answer to Jimmy's question. "I'll hang on this rock until they get you to the top."

Lighting the last of his matches, he noted the exact position of the ledge, and having placed the rope securely under Jimmy's arms, he gave the two jerks agreed on.

He knew that Joe and Herb would not be able to lift their combined weight, even if the old rope could stand the strain. So he let go himself, reaching for the ledge as he did so.

He breathed a sigh of thankfulness as Jimmy was drawn up past him. His own position was a precarious one. The rock to which he clung gave him little more than a finger hold, and he knew that his fingers would soon be so cramped and weakened by the strain that he would have to let go unless help came speedily.

Looking up, he could see a dim circle of light at the mouth of the well, and knew from this that Jimmy must have been drawn safely out. But his fingers now were becoming frightfully numb.

Soon they began to slip. Just as he thought he would have to drop, he felt the rough surface of the rope brush against his face. He could not see it, but he had to chance letting go of the rock

and making a wild grab at the rope. If he connected—all right. If not, a plunge in the icy water below and a slender chance of locating the rope under those conditions in the darkness.

He waited until he felt again the rasping touch of the rope, and then let go the rock and made a lightning-like grab for it. His numbed fingers closed around it, but the rope slipped through them. By a mighty effort he made his fingers obey his will. The slipping ceased, and he managed to hook an arm through the loop.

There was a strong tug at the rope, and he felt himself being pulled upward toward the fresh air and bright sunshine.

It was a tired but relieved group that took account of their condition as they were once more united on the barn floor. Jimmy, aside from the ducking, had suffered little damage, and Bob had nothing worse to show for the experience than strained muscles and several skinned knuckles.

They hurried to the farmhouse, where Jimmy was soon seated before the cookstove wrapped in heavy blankets and sipping hot drinks hastily prepared by worried Mrs. Owens, while the boys related the details of the accident to her and Uncle Lon, who had been summoned from his work.

"I swan to goodness, I'd just about forgotten every bit about that well!" exclaimed the latter,

who was all solicitude for Jimmy. "After we put in the windmill and got our water from the spring down in the pasture, we didn't need the old well any longer and so I floored it over. Those planks must have rotted out faster'n I thought they would. It was pretty good timber to start with, and I reckoned that it would last as long as I did myself. But the dampness has got at it and made it good for nothin' a good deal sooner than I'd ever have believed possible. I'll put some joists over it now that would hold up an elephant."

"That's the kind that Jimmy needs," said Herb. "I expected to see that rope break any minute while we were pulling him up. It felt like a load of bricks on the other end, didn't it, Joe?"

"Sure did," affirmed his friend. "If you hadn't been so fat, you wouldn't have broken through in the first place, Doughnuts. All the rest of us walked over that place, and nothing happened."

"It isn't the boy's fault," interposed Mrs. Owens, in Jimmy's behalf. "He is a hefty youngster, but not so that any half-way strong floor should give way under him. The safest way would be to fill up that well, Pa. Then we'd know that it couldn't do any harm."

Uncle Lon agreed with her on this point, after which they had a plentiful breakfast. Jimmy's

accident had not marred his appetite much, and by the time the meal was over he was his usual cheerful self. Dressed in dry clothes, he set out with the others to rig up the aerial for the radio set.

The boys mounted their antenna where Bob had planned, but gave the old well a wide berth this time. Each one knew just what to do, and it was not long until they had the wire neatly stretched between the barn and the house, with a leading-in wire to the living room. Uncle Lon was too busy with his farm duties to give them much assistance, but when he viewed the completed job, he had to admit that they had not required much. Everything was complete, lightning switch and all, and the Radio Boys were ready to listen in on whatever was going on in the air.

Bob did a little preliminary tuning, and then a loud, sonorous voice issued from the horn of the loud speaker. The owner of the voice was only giving the daily crop reports, but Mrs. Owens, to whom the sound was unexpected, could not have been more startled if a gun had gone off in the room. She jumped from her chair, and would have rushed from the room if Uncle Lon had not stopped her.

"There, there, Ma," he laughed. "Ain't anything goin' to hurt you. Sit down and listen to

what the man has to say." It was not long before Mrs. Owens developed into a regular "fan."

"I'd like to hark to that outfit all day," remarked Uncle Lon, after they had listened awhile, "but I've got a lot of second crop hay that's got to be got under cover. If you fellers want a little exercise you can help me a bit, and then we'll have more time for radio later on."

"Give us a pitchfork apiece, and we'll do the rest," answered Bob, and, delighted, the boys streamed out into the mellow sunshine and headed for the hayfield.

CHAPTER XII

TURNING THE TABLES

"I HAVE an idea that Uncle Lon is trying to put one over on us," remarked Bob, as they followed in the wake of their host.

"What makes you think that?" asked Joe.

"I caught a twinkle in his eyes," replied Bob. "He thinks we're soft as far as muscle goes, and he expects to see us wilt and quit. Then he'll have a laugh at us for being tenderfeet."

"So that's it, is it?" laughed Joe. "Well, now, it's too bad to spoil the old boy's little joke. Let's work, fellows, till we drop."

Uncle Lon had indeed calculated on having a little innocent enjoyment at the boys' expense. Wielding a pitchfork is not the easiest work in the world, especially under the hot sun, and tells quickly on muscles not accustomed to it.

But their late experience in the Ice Patrol had made the boys as hard as nails. They were in the pink of condition. Bob's tip also had aroused their pride and fighting spirit, and they deter-

mined to make Uncle Lon hustle to keep up with them. If he had experience, they had youth. He was one and they were four.

Jimmy and Herb raked the dry hay, and Bob and Joe pitched it on the wagon. Uncle Lon distributed the hay evenly about the load. The hired man who usually helped in the work was sick, so that the Radio Boys had to work fast to keep Uncle Lon supplied.

It was not long before the sweat was running from the boys in streams. Their arms grew heavy and their backs ached. But their pride was up, and they kept on working like beavers. They asked no quarter.

Uncle Lon, surprised at the endurance of his young helpers, looked at them every once in a while with bewilderment and growing respect. They sensed the meaning of his looks and grinned at each other on the sly, but kept on working.

And at the last, it was Uncle Lon who felt the need of a respite. The boys pitched hay at him so steadily that he became winded and called a halt.

"Guess we'll knock off a little while, so I can have a smoke and you youngsters can take a little rest," he said in a casual way.

Nothing could have been more welcome to the weary boys, but they would not have acknowledged it for the world.

"What, so soon?" asked Bob innocently.

"Just getting into the swing of it," added Joe.

"It's certainly lots of fun," remarked Herb.

"I think that's the way I'll spend all my vacations after this," put in Jimmy. "It's just light enough to keep one in good shape without tiring one out."

Uncle Lon looked rather sharply from one to the other, but they had their face muscles well under control, and there was not the glimmer of a smile.

"Same here," he remarked. "I could keep up the pace all day and never notice it. But I like to get in a little smoke once in a while."

The boys did not venture to look at each other.

At last Uncle Lon knocked the ashes out of his pipe.

"Guess we'll start in again," he said, rising. "Looks to me as though we might have a thunderstorm before the day's over. Seems to me I can never get my hay in without rain coming along and spoilin' a good part of it."

"Oh, well, this hay is all velvet anyway," Joe reminded him. "You said yourself that if it hadn't been for this late fall you wouldn't have had this second crop at all."

"Yes, that's probably true. But even if it is late hay, I don't want to see it ruined by the rain."

"We're ready to start in again as soon as you are, Uncle Lon," Bob assured him. "You're the boss and we're only the hired men, you know."

"Wish I could get hired men who'd work the way you youngsters do," remarked the farmer. "You've got more pep in a minute than they have in a week."

"Speaking of hired men reminds me of a story," broke in Herb. "You see it was like this——"

Joe interrupted with a vigorous protest, but Uncle Lon gave Herb the desired word of encouragement.

"Let's hear it," he said. "I can tell you, hired men are no joke to me though."

"It seems," said Herb, "that there was a moving picture company out to take some country scenes, and one of them was supposed to be located on a certain farm. The director of the company saw the owner and offered to hire his farm for a day to take pictures.

"Wall," drawled the farmer, "you kin have the farm all right, but you'll never be able to get any moving pictures of my hired men. I've been tryin' fur thirty years to make 'em move, but I've never succeeded yet."

"Ha, ha," laughed Uncle Lon. "That's a good one, that is. I know just how that feller felt, too.

I'll have to tell that joke to the bunch down at the store the next time I drive in."

Herb's jokes were dear to his heart, and he was pleased at results of this one.

"Uncle Lon's got a real sense of humor," he said. "You onions can't appreciate good humor, and I don't know why I waste it on you."

"It isn't our fault," Joe pointed out. "We never ask you to tell us any of your so-called jokes! Do we, fellows?"

"I should say not," answered Bob, grinning. "There's enough hard luck coming to everybody in this world without asking for it."

"That's putting it pretty strong," protested Uncle Lon, with a laugh. "If they're all as good as that one about the hired men, I'd like to hear some more of them."

"Here's one I thought of just this morning," said Herb, eagerly. "What's the difference——"

"Say, I think it is going to rain, at that," interrupted Joe. "We'd better get busy, fellows, and get a few more loads into the barn before it comes down, don't you think?"

"Right!" exclaimed Bob. "Grab your fork there, Herb, and get busy. You don't want Uncle Lon's hay to get wet, do you?"

"No. But just wait till you hear this joke. It won't take a minute. What's the dif——"

"I tell you what, Herb," interposed Joe. "You

save that joke up and tell it to us week after next. Something tells me it will sound better then, and perhaps we won't be as busy as we are right now."

"If you boys want to work so much, guess I'd better accommodate you," remarked Uncle Lon, as he climbed back on the fragrant load.

Herb grumbled a little at his comrades' lack of appreciation, but was soon too busy keeping up with the rest to waste much thought upon it.

They got two loads safely into the barn, but by the time they had the third stacked on the wagon the sky was so lowering that Uncle Lon decided they had better quit before they got a drenching.

"Jump up on the load, boys, and we'll make a quick trip to the barn," he said. "From the looks of things it's going to rain hard pretty soon. I guess we've done a good afternoon's work, anyway."

The boys did as directed, although it was only by dint of much pushing and hauling on the part of the others that Jimmy finally reached the top.

Then they set off at a fast pace for the barn, the horses apparently knowing that this was the last load.

"Now's a good chance to tell you that joke," said Herb, who refused to be daunted by his friends' lack of interest. "It's a good one, and

you'll have plenty of time to enjoy it before we get to the barn."

"Great Scott!" ejaculated Joe. "Isn't there some way to stop him? You're nearest to him, Bob. Do something."

Bob had noticed that Herb was sitting close to the edge of the load, and Uncle Lon had been in such haste that he had not piled it as carefully as usual. Where Herb was sitting the hay was rather loose, and, at Joe's appeal, Bob slyly loosened the hay a little more with his fork.

Herb was just getting ready to spring his joke when the hay suddenly slid out from under him in a small avalanche down the back of the load.

Herb grasped frantically at the air and then at the hay.

Fate was against him. Down he went, clawing, struggling, sputtering, a whirling medley of arms and legs.

CHAPTER XIII

FACE TO FACE WITH OLD ENEMIES

WHEN the hay stopped sliding there was a conical pile in the field, with a great commotion going on in the center.

A minute later Herb emerged, hay clinging to him everywhere and sticking out of his neck and hair.

The boys left on the load were holding their sides and shaking with laughter, but Herb's vaunted sense of humor for the moment had deserted him.

He was not sure that Bob had purposely spilled him, but he strongly suspected it.

"Look who's here," said Joe in mock surprise.

"Finest specimen of a hayseed I ever saw," remarked Jimmy, looking him over judicially.

"That's a fine trick to play!" sputtered Herb. "What are you Indians laughing like that for? You must think it's a great joke to dump me into the road."

"Where do you get that word, trick?" asked

Bob, with a baby stare of innocence. "How can we help it if you fall off the wagon? You were sitting too close to the edge."

Uncle Lon, who was trying to keep a straight face, had stopped the horses, and in a few minutes the fallen hay was restored to the top of the load.

Herb still had his suspicions, but his good humor was soon restored.

"You fellows are the losers, anyway," he remarked. "I was going to tell you a good one, one of the best, but now I'm going to keep it to myself."

"Is that a threat or a promise?" asked Joe.

Herb cast on him a would-be withering look, but before he could think of a suitable retort there came a flash of lightning, followed by a tremendous thunderclap.

Uncle Lon urged his horses to a faster gait, as they were still some distance from the barn.

"Looks as though we might get wet," remarked Jimmy, with a look at the heavy black clouds that lowered above them, from which at intervals a jagged streak of lightning flashed across the sky.

"It doesn't matter if we do," replied Bob, "but I sure would hate to see this load of hay get a soaking."

Scattered drops began to fall about them. But now the barn loomed close at hand. Bob sprang down and threw open the doors, and the next

moment the horses had drawn the wagon inside.

They were just in time. Scarcely had the boys slid down from the load when the storm burst.

The rain came down in torrents on the shingled roof, but the boys cared little for that. They were safe and dry inside, and they enjoyed the sight of the rain pouring off the roof and running in little brooks and rivulets down the hill. They had not lived in Horseshoe Valley, and to them the rain meant only the chance of a wetting. To Uncle Lon, however, every heavy rainfall had an ominous significance.

He stood looking at the pouring water with a dubious frown on his face.

"Chances are this rain won't amount to much," he said. "The sky seems to be getting lighter all the time. But whenever it rains around here, we begin to think about the big dam."

"That's so," said Bob. "I never thought of that. I shouldn't think that an ordinary shower could make much difference to it, though."

"Probably this shower won't make much difference; but it has been an unusually wet summer, and the heavy fall rains are due almost any time now. The water is higher than it ever has been before at this time of year since the dam was built, and we folks around here can't help feeling a little worried about it."

"If the dam is such a dangerous thing, I

should think it would have been better not to have built it at all," remarked Joe, not without considerable logic.

"Well, sometimes I think the same thing myself," admitted Mr. Owens. "It seems to be a choice of two evils, though. I suppose the dam is really safe enough; but when you stop to think what would happen if it should give way, it kind of gives you the shivers."

Just then, however, it seemed as though Uncle Lon had little ground for his dark forebodings. The storm went as quickly as it had come, and now a beam of sunlight struck through the big barn door and sent a shaft of light into the dusty corners.

The boys gave a whoop of delight at this, and set to work to get the last load of hay up into the mow, after which work would be over for the day. The wagon was soon cleared of its load, and then they all headed for the farmhouse, where they knew supper must be ready and waiting for them. Hector met them half way, looking rather guilty at having deserted them all the afternoon. He had been off with one of the farm dogs, scouring the surrounding country, and had just returned a few minutes before. The boys had missed him, but now they gave him a riotous greeting, and he was soon barking frantically as they rolled him over and wrestled with him.

"Guess your dog likes the country, all right," observed Uncle Lon. "He's made friends with my dogs, and that shows he must be a pretty good dog himself. They won't have anything to do with a dog that hasn't got sense enough to take care of himself in the woods."

"Oh, Hector can take care of himself pretty near anywhere," said Joe. "Can't you, old long-ears?" and he patted the dog lovingly. Hector sat down, his brown eyes fixed on his friend and his tail thumped the ground as a sign that he agreed thoroughly with all Joe said.

"To-morrow I want you to stick around with us," Jimmy told him. "You've done your exploring to-day, but we're going to do ours to-morrow, and we want you to go along. Understand?"

Hector gave a short bark, which Jimmy said meant assent, and whether or not the dog understood him, the fact remains that he was hanging about when the boys came out of the house early the next morning, bent on exploring Horseshoe Valley as thoroughly as it could be done in one day.

It was a beautiful Indian summer day, with brilliant sunshine, and yet enough nip in the air to hint of approaching winter and set the blood to racing.

The Radio Boys had a plentiful lunch with

them, which Mrs. Owens had put up with her usual generosity. The boys took turns carrying the basket in which it was packed, and it was a hard trial for Jimmy to carry so much good food and yet not be able to get at it when he wanted to. The others kept a wary eye on him, however, and he knew that he did not have a chance until lunch-time came.

The boys had not gone far before they came to the creek with which they now made their first acquaintance. It was a larger body of water than they had imagined it was when seen from a distance. It was far too deep to wade, and in places attained a width of from forty to fifty feet. In others it narrowed to fifteen or twenty.

The boys kept their eyes open for some means of crossing it, but had to walk along the banks for nearly a mile before they came to a place where a few planks had been thrown across making a makeshift bridge.

Along the banks on both sides were many fallen trees, victims of past floods that had washed away the soil from their roots and left them to come crashing down.

Looking at these mute witnesses of bygone devastations, the boys could better understand the uneasiness of the people who dwelt under the shadow of such memories and in fear of the repetition of the havoc.

In the distance they could see the gap in the hills that the river had cut in bygone ages, where now the big dam stretched from side to side.

"If that big chunk of concrete ever gives way, I only hope I'm somewhere else at the time," observed Joe soberly, and the others echoed his thought. They were glad that Clintonia had no such menace hanging over it.

Hector was the one of the party that had no worries over the future. The golden present was enough for him, and he enjoyed it to the utmost. He was here, there and everywhere. He routed out more than one frightened rabbit, and sent it scurrying into the underbrush. Then he would come back and look at the boys, waiting for the praise that they felt obliged to give him, although they had to laugh at him at the same time.

"Good old pup," said Bob, after one of these forays. "I wonder what you'd do, though, if you stumbled across a big black bear in those woods. I'll bet you wouldn't look so happy then."

"He'd look a lot happier than I would," declared Jimmy. "Ever since those bears attacked us while we were on the raft out in the lake, I've been mighty leary of them. They've got awfully wicked-looking teeth when you see them close."

"There's one now!" exclaimed Joe, pointing over Jimmy's shoulder. Jimmy dropped the

lunch basket and scuttled for the nearest tree until he was stopped by the laughter of his friends.

"Say, what do you want to give me heart failure like that for?" he said, returning with a sheepish grin on his face. "You scared me out of a year's growth."

"I don't know what we ought to do to you for dropping the lunch that way," said Joe severely. "You ought at least to have tried to take that up the tree with you. Suppose there had been a real bear after you. He'd have eaten our lunch up, and then where would we have been?"

"Well, I'd rather have him eat the lunch than eat me," retorted the fat boy.

"Yes, but we wouldn't," said Herb cruelly. "What you should do is to let the bear eat you, and it's a cinch that after that he wouldn't have any room left for our lunch."

"There's a good deal in that," agreed Bob, gravely. "The day would be ruined if a bear got our lunch."

"Huh! I don't seem to cut much ice around here," grumbled Jimmy, as he shouldered the basket once more. "If you think I'm going to volunteer for bear bait, you've got another guess coming."

They followed the course of the stream for a while, and then struck off toward the mountains

that rimmed the valley. These they reached before noon, and then decided to climb up a way to find a good place to eat their lunch.

Before long they reached a spot that seemed ideal. The whole valley lay stretched out below them, and they were so high that they could see the glint of the sun on the lake that extended back of the dam. The view was so fine that even Jimmy admitted that it was worth the climb.

He set about unpacking the basket and soon had a bountiful lunch spread out on the grass.

They were just on the last round of a big apple pie when they heard a crashing in the bushes further up the mountain side. This rapidly grew more distinct.

"Somebody coming!" exclaimed Jimmy.

"Yes, I guess you're right," murmured Joe lazily. "Perhaps it's that bear we were talking about."

The bushes at the edge of the little clearing parted, and Buck Looker and Carl Lutz came stumbling out into the open.

CHAPTER XIV

A FRUITLESS CHASE

At sight of the Radio Boys, the bullies pulled up short, gazing truculently at the group. It was evidently as much a surprise to one side as to the other.

Then Buck's customary sneer came over his face, and he turned toward his crony.

"Just see who's here!" he said, in his grating voice. "Just having a nice little party all by themselves, telling each other what great fellows they are, and we have to come along and interrupt them. I suppose they think we haven't any right here at that. How did you fellows get up here, anyhow?"

"We came by airplane, but we just sent the pilot away to get some gas," replied Herb. "Too bad you didn't come a little sooner, and you could have gone with him."

"He's apt to be back any minute though," put in Joe. "Stick around and we'll introduce you."

"They're trying to kid us, Buck," said Lutz.

"An airplane couldn't land in a place like this."

Buck glanced contemptuously at his henchman before answering Joe.

"You fellows think you can get gay with us because you're four to two," he growled. "If I had a couple of my pals here, we'd mop you up."

"That sounds interesting," remarked Bob. "We'll wait here until you go and get them."

"Yes, that sounds all right; but you know Carl and I are visiting this place alone," sneered Buck.

"Too bad," said Bob. "You might telephone for Bud Hayes and some others of your gang. You're good at telephoning, Buck; or rather, in getting some one else to telephone for you."

A startled glance passed between Buck and his companion.

"You ought to cram that down his throat," snarled Lutz. "Go ahead, Buck, and paste him one."

Bob laughed at this.

"Why not try it yourself, Lutz?" he asked, and took three quick strides that brought him close to the bully. "Paste away and see what happens."

Lutz backed away hurriedly. He had felt the weight of Bob's fist too recently and was not anxious to repeat the experience. He much preferred to do his fighting in an underhand way.

"I'll get you sooner or later," he mumbled.

"You're a good bluffer, Bob Layton, but you can't scare me."

"I guess I can't, at that," replied Bob. "You're scared already. It seems that we can't be lucky enough to steer clear of you two. We're just sitting here quietly, and you have to come horning in and start a rumpus. Suppose you go your way and we'll go ours. This valley ought to be big enough for all of us. You don't like us, and we don't care for you. You were going somewhere when you came out of those bushes. Why not keep on going?"

"We'll go when we get good and ready," growled Lutz.

Buck said nothing, but as his eyes roved about the little clearing, they lit on a place at the edge of the trees where a number of stones were scattered about.

"Aw, come along, Carl," he growled. "Our turn will come later."

The two slouched away, but as they reached the stones, Buck stooped swiftly and rose with one of the largest in his hand.

"Here's something to remember us by!" he snarled viciously, as he hurled it straight at Bob's head.

Had Bob not been on the lookout for some act of treachery, he would surely have been struck by the flying missile. As it was, he dodged swiftly,

and the stone whizzed harmlessly past him and bounded off a tree into the underbrush.

The moment Buck threw the stone, he turned and ran at the top of his speed, with Lutz at his heels. The Radio Boys, taken by surprise, were dazed for a moment, but then with one accord they dashed after the fugitives.

The bullies had the start of them, and in the woods they found a faithful ally in their escape. The trees hid them from sight, and their pursuers had to run more or less at random. Buck and Lutz doubled and turned, and in a short time the Radio Boys had to acknowledge that their enemies had given them the slip for the time at least.

"Oh, well, let them go," said Bob, when he saw that they might as well give up the chase. "There's no harm done, although that isn't Buck's fault. That stone whizzed by my head like a bullet."

"If it had connected, we might have been wondering what kind of flowers to order for you," said Herb. "I can stand for some things, but throwing rocks isn't one of them. We ought to find out where those fellows are boarding and hunt them up."

"That's an unusually good idea for you, Herb," said Joe. "Come on, fellows, let's go."

"Hey! Wait a minute, you fellows," laughed

Bob. "Keep your hat on, Joe. In the first place, we don't know where Buck and Carl are staying, so how are we going to get there?"

"Well, that's so," admitted Joe. "We could ask questions, though. They all know each other in this valley, and we could soon get track of them."

"It ought to be easy," remarked Jimmy. "Just ask for the two meanest fellows that have ever come into the neighborhood, and probably they'd be pointed out to us instanter."

"I wouldn't be surprised," agreed Bob. "Probably they've got a reputation for themselves already. But as long as Buck missed me with that stone, it seems to me that we're well rid of them. We'll come across them soon enough, without going out of our way to hunt them up."

"Well, maybe you're right," agreed Joe, somewhat dubiously. "My hands are itching to give Buck a good licking, just the same. He sure is a yellow dog to do a thing like that."

The others felt the same way, but they had to admit that Bob was right when he said that they would come across the bullies soon without looking for them. Bob made no claims to being a prophet, but he hardly expected his prediction would come true as soon as it did.

Hector, who had been off in the woods chasing squirrels when Looker and his friend arrived

on the scene, now reappeared, and the boys judged that it was time to start for the Owens farmhouse if they expected to get there for supper.

They gathered up the remains of the lunch and set out on the homeward journey.

"If Hector had only been with us when Buck pulled that rough stuff, I'll bet we could have trailed the two of them without any trouble," observed Joe. "That's the time you fell down on the job, old fellow."

Hector looked doubtfully at the speaker, and wagged his tail feebly, not being sure whether he was being scolded or praised. He finally decided on the former, and looked so dejected that Joe had to relent.

"It isn't right to blame the dog if he wanders away sometimes," said Jimmy. "He's probably afraid that if he sticks around too much Herb will try to tell him a joke. I often feel like beating it for the tall timber myself when I see Herb winding up for one of those sad stories. Hector's got more sense than we credit him with."

Bob set a swift pace, and the sun was still visible over the treetops when they came to the place where they had crossed the stream earlier in the day. The boys recognized the spot, but the planks that had bridged the stream at that time were gone. The boys knew they could not be mistaken about this being the right place, be-

cause they could see the marks of the planks in the soft soil on both sides of the creek.

They looked at each other, sorely puzzled.

"Some kids must have been monkeying around here," conjectured Joe.

"Those planks were too heavy for kids to have carted away," objected Bob. "It looks to me as though our good friends, Carl and Buck, have been here before us."

"That's the way they like to fight their battles," remarked Joe. "It's a good deal safer than standing up in front of one. If we could get our hands on them, I'll bet they'd put those boards back faster than they took them away."

"My guess is that they're not far off," ventured Jimmy. "They're probably hiding around somewhere to see what we'll do."

Bob cast his eyes about, and noticed a small tree on the edge of the creek that had been so undermined by the water that it was almost ready to fall. It inclined toward the creek, and most of its roots were already out of the ground. A very little digging in the soft, wet soil would release it altogether. So slender was its hold on the ground even now that it swayed as they pushed it, but did not quite yield.

"A little more digging, fellows, and it will go over," judged Bob. "Let's get a hustle on."

They fell to with their hands and a small

hatchet that they had in the woodman's kit that they always carried with them in the woods, and in a short time their labors were crowned with success.

"Back, fellows!" cried Bob, as the tree began to topple.

It swayed for a moment and then fell with a crash, its topmost branches reaching well over on the other bank of the creek.

"A better bridge than we had this morning," cried Joe exultantly. "The planks might have broken, but this trunk won't."

"No chance," said Bob, as he jumped on the extemporized bridge and ran across.

As he did so he saw two boys, apparently of about his own age, coming toward him on the other side of the creek. Bob jumped off the fallen tree just as they came up.

They were husky country lads, and the larger one approached Bob truculently.

"Say, 'pears to me you've got lots of gall cuttin' down trees here," he said. "Who gave you a license to do that, I'd like to know?"

CHAPTER XV

A HOT ENCOUNTER

Bob did not like the unpleasant way in which the inquiry was put, but he was never one to look for trouble, and he answered quietly enough.

"I didn't know there'd be any objection to that," he said. "The tree was about ready to fall anyway. Some one had taken the plank bridge away, and there was no other way to get across."

"I don't care a hoot about that," responded the other, with an ugly frown. "That tree was on my father's property, and he could have the law on you for touchin' it. You city fellers ain't got any right to come around here and think you can do whatever you please. For two pins I'd chase you back to the other side and make you stay there."

Bob's blood boiled at the offensiveness of the speech and tone, but he held himself under control.

"There's no need of taking that tone," he said.

"If I've done any real damage to your father's property, I'm willing to pay for it."

"I ought to take the damages out of your hide," the boy said, mistaking Bob's self-control for fear.

Bob's eyes grew hard, and a steely glitter came into them that the other did not appear to notice. When Bob spoke again, his voice was still quiet, but there was a note in it that should have carried a warning.

"You seem to be pretty sure you can do it," he said. "What's your idea of the best way to go about it?"

For answer the other made a swing at him, but Bob was not there as its target. He stepped to one side, and as the other was thrown off his balance by the force of his lunge, Bob's fist shot out and caught him in the jaw. He staggered back, and tripped over a root that threw him to the ground.

As he fell, his companion gave a shout and dashed at Bob. The latter had not had time to get set, but as the other charged at him he ducked and at the same time extended his elbow, so that it caught his adversary square in the midriff. The fellow gave a tremendous grunt as the breath was knocked out of him, and sat down heavily, with a bewildered expression on his face.

"I'm still here," said Bob. "You'd better think

up a better way of chasing me across, because the one you had didn't seem to work very well."

All this had happened very quickly, but now Joe had crossed and taken his place at Bob's side, while Jimmy and Herb also hurried over the impromptu bridge.

Hector was barking furiously on the far side, but had to stay there during the fracas until some one could come back and help him across the narrow trunk.

"You'll get across, never fear," growled the boy who had first attacked Bob. "It's lucky for you I tripped or I'd have made it hot for you. Here come two of my friends now, an' when they get here, you fellers had better make yourselves scarce."

"We've still got time to run, fellows," observed Bob. "Nice of him to warn us, isn't it?"

"It sure is," replied Joe. "If it's just the same to him though, let's stay here and see what happens."

Something happened very quickly. Along the path came another boy, a stranger to them, with Buck Looker and Carl Lutz close on his heels.

"Turning up again, like bad pennies," muttered Jimmy.

"I see the whole thing now!" exclaimed Bob. "Buck has hustled around and gathered up some

of the new pals that he's picked up since he's been here, fellows of the same kind as himself."

"Yes," agreed Joe. "And he sent those first two ahead just for the purpose of picking a quarrel. I thought it strange that a fellow should get so hot over a little thing like that tree. It's all a put up job."

"Here they come!" shouted the boy who had first come into contact with Bob's fist. "You fellers are goin' to get the trimmin' of your lives. That big feller there is Buck Looker, an' he's a terrible scrapper. He told me so himself."

Buck advanced with a swagger and a malicious grin on his face. At last, he thought, he had his enemies just where he wanted them. He expected to see them run, and figured on catching them at a further disadvantage as they tried to cross the stream on the fallen tree.

But running was the last thing that Bob and his comrades were thinking of.

"Hello, Buck," Bob greeted him. "So you're the terrible scrapper, are you? Since when?"

"None of your funny business, Bob Layton," growled Buck, a red flush suffusing his heavy face. "That won't get you anywhere. You're in for a licking."

"Now, that's interesting," replied Bob. "It will be a new experience for me to have you lick me. You've tried it several times, you know, and

haven't done it yet. Still there's no harm in trying. But what's the use of all of us getting mussed up? Let's see how much sporting blood you've got, Buck. I'll fight it out with you alone, you for your side and I for mine. How about it?"

"Take him up, Buck!" shouted the boy who had sung Buck's praises, and who, despite the odds in his favor, was not over-anxious to come again to fisticuffs with the determined-looking Radio Boys.

Buck was visibly annoyed and embarrassed. This was a development he had not foreseen. He hated to "take water" in the presence of the boys to whom he had bragged. But he hated still more the idea of standing up against Bob on even terms.

"Aw, I could lick you all right," he blustered. "But those other boys have got to get theirs too. Come along, fellows, and pitch into them."

The crowd moved forward to the attack, confident in their size and numbers.

But suddenly, to their surprise, they found that they were defenders instead of attackers. The Radio Boys knew the advantage of getting in the first blow.

Bob sprang forward like a flash, followed by Joe and the others, and plunged headlong into the ranks of his opponents.

In an instant a battle royal was going on. Bob caught Buck square on the chin, getting a blow in the shoulder in return. Joe singled out Lutz, and rained a shower of blows on him that made him give ground. Jimmy and Herb engaged the others, doing their best against odds, and making up to some extent by their courage and determination for the superior weight of their opponents.

As often as they could, Joe and Bob, after staggering Buck and Lutz, would come to the relief of their younger comrades, and get in a blow or two where it would do the most good.

"Look out, Bob!" shouted Joe, on one of these occasions.

Bob looked just in time to dodge a blow from a heavy stick that Buck had picked up and swung at him.

The force of the swing had turned Buck around so that his back was toward the creek.

As Bob sprang toward him, his eyes blazing with anger at the cowardly attempt to use a weapon, Buck retreated hastily, and with a loud splash went heels over head into the water.

CHAPTER XVI

FALLING THROUGH SPACE

THE brawl ended then and there.

The aggressors were just about ready to admit defeat anyway, and the sudden loss of the ring-leader clinched the matter. Hostilities were suspended by common consent, and all rushed to the edge of the creek.

The water was deep where Buck had gone in, but as he could swim, that did not matter. What did matter, to him at least, was the sorry figure he presented to the eyes, not only of his enemies, but to his own cronies. He was anything but a "terrible scrapper," as with his hair plastered over his face and the water dripping from his clothes, he climbed out on the muddy bank, looking like a scarecrow.

All the fight was taken out of him, but his heart was full of sullen rage at the miscarriage of his plans.

The Radio Boys were too generous to laugh at his plight, though they had hard work to keep their faces straight.

"I'll get you yet for this, Bob Layton!" Buck snarled. "I can't fight in these wet clothes, but I'll lay for you."

"Any time, Buck," answered Bob carelessly. "Laying for me seems to be about the best thing you do. The trouble is that you don't know what to do to me when you catch me. Even when you use a stick instead of your fists, you don't seem to have much luck."

Buck mumbled something that they could not understand, and drew away with his discomfited cronies through the woods. The Radio Boys gazed after them until they were lost to sight among the trees.

"That ought to hold them for a while," remarked Bob, with a grin, as he turned to his companions.

"They'd be gluttons if they wanted any more," replied Herb. "Gee, Bob, but you certainly shake a mean fist."

"Wonder what Buck will try the next time," remarked Jimmy. "He's tried both sticks and stones to-day."

"And neither one of them worked," laughed Joe. "Buck's certainly playing in hard luck."

"He's such a sneak!" growled Jimmy.

They had not come out of the contest scatheless themselves, for the fight had been hot and furious while it lasted. But their minor bruises were for-

gotten in their exultation at having put their enemies to flight.

They had been so engrossed in the fracas that they had not noticed that a storm was threatening. But suddenly there came a clap of thunder, followed by another a moment later.

"Come on, fellows, let's get Hector and make a break for home!" exclaimed Bob.

Poor Hector had tried his best to come to the assistance of his friends during the battle. He had ventured out on the narrow tree trunk, but when about half-way across had lost his balance and fallen into the water. He reached the bank, but the mud was wet and clinging, and Hector was so bogged down that he could hardly move.

With some effort and amid much laughter, the boys got him up on solid ground and started hot-foot for the Owens farm, bent on getting there before the storm broke.

"Don't want to get as wet as Buck is," remarked Jimmy, with a chuckle.

They had still quite a distance to go, and it was a race with the coming storm, but they won, getting into the comfortable kitchen just before the rain came down with a rush.

They found that supper was nearly ready, and they had no more than time to go to their rooms and get a hasty wash and brush before they were

summoned to the appetizing meal that Mrs. Owens had prepared.

"What's the matter with your cheek, Jimmy?" asked Uncle Lon. "It looks kind o' swelled. Have a fall or something?"

"Had a little run in with some fellows down by the creek," replied Jimmy.

Mrs. Owens looked up quickly.

"Goodness me, I hope you boys haven't been fighting!" she exclaimed.

"Just defending ourselves," explained Bob. "A lot of fellows set on us, and there was nothing else for us to do."

Then, in response to the questions of their host and hostess, the boys told all that had happened to them that afternoon.

"You did just right," pronounced Uncle Lon, when they had finished. "A boy who won't fight back when he's set on isn't worth his salt. I'm glad that Looker feller got all that was comin' to him. But I'm wonderin' who those fellers were that were with him. What did they look like?"

The Radio Boys described them as well as they could, and Uncle Lon nodded.

"I guess I can place 'em," he said. "They must have been the Lasher boys. They're a quarrelsome lot. Most of the boys around here are nice young fellers, an' you'll like 'em when you get

acquainted with 'em. The Lasher boys are different. I heard tell that the Lashers had some boarders. I guess that's where this Buck Looker and his friend are puttin' up."

"I shouldn't wonder," replied Bob. "Buck's been bragging to them about what a fighter he is, and he got them to help him jump on us."

It rained steadily all that evening, and several times Mr. Owens went uneasily to the door and looked out.

"Still worrying over the dam, Uncle Lon?" asked Joe.

"I can't help worryin'," was the reply. "Not only over the dam, but over the creek."

"The creek seemed all right this afternoon," said Bob. "That rain of a day or two ago didn't seem to swell it any."

"The first rains don't," replied Uncle Lon. "If the ground is dry, it takes most of the water up. But after a while the ground gets saturated, and then the water runs off into the creek or any other stream that's handy. And then, you've got to look out for trouble."

"Now, Pa, quit worryin'," counseled Mrs. Owens, biting off a thread, where she sat sewing. "Don't let's trouble trouble till trouble troubles us."

"That's all right, Ma," replied Uncle Lon. "But I have a hunch that these rains mean mis-

chief. I can't seem to get it out of my mind."

"Guess you folks need cheering up," said Herb, taking from his pocket a harmonica which he had picked up around the farmhouse, and on which he was an expert. "I'm the boy to do it. I'm the greatest little cheerer-up in captivity."

"No, you don't," said Joe, making a dive for the instrument. "I know a trick worth two of that. Let's get the radio going and have a regular jazz concert."

Herb looked aggrieved, but the vote was against him, and for the next hour they picked out of the air such jolly, lively, frolicsome music that it served as a tonic, chased away the blues, and sent every one to bed in the best of spirits.

Still, as Bob lay in his bed that night and listened to the patter of the rain, the thought of Uncle Lon's hunch attached itself to him and persisted, despite his efforts to shake it off.

Why should the shrewd, hard-headed farmer feel so uneasy at this particular time? Many seasons had come and passed without any such brooding. Why did it make itself felt just now? Was there really anything in premonitions? Did coming events sometimes cast their shadows before?

Bob rose from his bed and went to the window. The rain and mist made it impossible for him to see more than a few rods from the house.

He looked toward the hill where the dam lay, high, frowning, menacing.

He could not see it, but he knew it was there, knew that behind it lay a great body of water, holding within itself vast possibilities of death and destruction.

It was like a tiger behind its bars. If the bars held, the tiger was harmless. But if the bars should break!

Would the dam hold?

He thought of the Johnstown flood, that frightful catastrophe of years ago, and shivered.

He went back to bed at last, but it was a long time before he got to sleep.

But when he woke the next morning, he laughed at the gloomy thoughts of the night before. For the rain had ceased, the sun was shining gloriously through the window, the air had never seemed so fresh and sweet.

From below was wafted up to him the savory odors of bacon and coffee that whetted an appetite that seldom needed stimulating, and it was with a whistle on his lips that Bob washed and dressed and joined his comrades at the breakfast table.

He found them all imbued with the same joyous spirits, Uncle Lon's forebodings having been swept away, temporarily at least, by the

cheery sunshine that made the whole room radiant.

"Rain didn't amount to much after all," remarked Joe, as he took a second platter of buckwheat cakes.

"No," agreed Uncle Lon. "Purty fierce while it lasted, but didn't stay long. Looks now like we might have a spell of good weather."

"It would be a glorious day to go nutting," said Jimmy, looking out of the window.

"Little too soon, it seems to me," remarked Herb. "Haven't had any frost yet that I've noticed."

"Not in the valley," observed Uncle Lon. "But up on the hills frost comes earlier than it does down here, and I shouldn't wonder if you might find a right smart lot of burrs on the ground. There's lots of hickory trees up there."

"Let's take a hack at them, anyway," suggested Bob. "Even if we don't find any, we'll have a glorious hike."

Mrs. Owens hunted around and found enough bags to provide each with one, and shortly after breakfast the boys set out, each boasting that he would fill his bag sooner than any of his companions.

On the lower slopes of the hills they had very little luck. They came across plenty of hickory

trees, but the burrs clung tenaciously to the trees and did not yield easily, even when the boys threw clubs up against the branches.

But as they got higher they found that Uncle Lon's supposition was true, and that frost had strewn the ground with burrs in profusion. The higher they went the more they found, so that they hastened their steps and were soon on the highest part of the range of hills that overlooked the valley.

The view was glorious, but they were too intent on filling their bags to pay much attention to it. Insensibly they drew further and further apart, and at times in the thick woods were out of sight of each other.

Herb caught sight of a tree some distance off that he recognized as a hickory, and made for it.

He was pressing his way through the undergrowth when suddenly the ground seemed to give way under him.

A startled cry burst from his lips as he felt himself falling!

CHAPTER XVII

IN TERRIBLE PLIGHT

STARK terror held Herb in its grip, as he felt himself falling through space.

He threw his hands out wildly. One of them grasped a bush growing out from the side of the ravine, and though it was torn from his grasp, it helped somewhat in checking the velocity of his descent.

The cliff over which he had fallen dropped sheer for perhaps fifteen or twenty feet. Then it began to slope outward, though still at a very steep angle.

Herb struck the side of the ravine but was not able to keep his feet. He rolled over and over like a stone bounding down a mountain side. Then he reached a sudden turn and felt himself again launched into the air.

He brought up in the branches of a great tree that rose from the bottom of the ravine. He crashed through the upper boughs, each of which served somewhat to break his fall, and came to

rest at last in a crotch formed by two great branches.

He was so shaken and bewildered that at first he did not realize where he was or just what had happened. His head was in a whirl. Only his subconscious mind and the instinct of preservation prompted him to hold on desperately to the branches in which he found himself.

But as his head gradually cleared, he found that he did not have to hold on. His coat and trousers had been penetrated by the twigs of the tree, and he was held securely. He could not fall if he wanted to. The tree had made him a prisoner.

For the moment this brought him a certain sense of relief, for it freed him from his fear of falling. Then he tried to get himself in hand and take account of the damage he had suffered in his fall.

His face and hands were scratched and bleeding and he knew that he must have bruises all over his body. But these were minor things. Were any of his limbs broken?

Slowly he moved one arm, then another, and was delighted to find that they obeyed his will. Then he tried his legs. These too he could control.

Intensely thankful for this, he tried to plan the best way of escape from his predicament. The

obvious way was to release the grip the tree held on his clothes, and then gradually make his way down the tree. Once on the ground, he could try by some roundabout way to reach his comrades or make his way to the farmhouse.

But he was in such a constrained position, his clothes so tight and twisted and gripped, that he found it difficult to get free. Still, he would have been able to do this in time. But he found his head growing so dizzy from the exertion that he feared he might lose consciousness when he had nearly succeeded in releasing himself. In that case, it would mean a fall and possible death.

He must get his comrades to help him. So he shouted with all his might. But his voice was weak, and the steep side of the cliff helped to shut off the sound.

Again and again he called as loudly as he could, but he listened in vain for an answering shout.

But another sound came to him—a sound that sent a chill through his blood.

It was a hideous snarl such as he had never before heard, full of malignity, full of savagery, full of menace.

Then, as he looked in the direction of the sound, he caught sight, on one of the lower branches, of a thick body, an evil face, yellow eyes and cruel teeth, the teeth revealed the more clearly by the lips drawn back in a ferocious grin.

Herb had never seen a wildcat, but he knew without telling that he was looking at one now. He recalled talk he had heard of one that was believed to be in the vicinity and which had been supposed to be responsible for many losses the farmers had suffered.

The boy's heart sank within him. He had nothing with him that could be used as a weapon except his jackknife, and the very thought of that was ludicrous in connection with such an opponent. He could not even flee, supposing that flight had been possible. His freedom of movement was fettered. He was like a man in a strait-jacket, waiting for death to pounce on him.

The beast crouched on its branch, watching him with baleful, unwinking eyes. Herb stared back at it, conscious that his only hope lay in maintaining a brave front.

Then gradually, very gradually, the wildcat began moving nearer!

Casting about wildly in his mind, Herb suddenly remembered something that he had heard about the effect of music on wild beasts. It was in that way that the snake charmers of India controlled their deadly charges.

It was the forlornest of forlorn hopes, the very counsel of despair; but it was all he had, and, with a quavering, uncertain voice, poor Herb began to sing.

Instantly the beast halted. The ferocity of its eyes was unabated, but into them crept a little shade of puzzlement. This was something new in the animal's experience. A shout it would have regarded as a challenge. But melody was a mystery.

Whether the wildcat was charmed, daunted, or bewildered, it was impossible to tell. Perhaps it was a little of each. But the only thing that mattered was that its approach was halted.

The beast crouched again on the branch and sat motionless, the wicked yellow eyes fastened in an unblinking stare on those of the singer.

With a sensation of great relief at the apparent success of his device, Herb summoned to mind all the songs he knew, from Mother Goose rimes to selections from the opera. When a new one failed to present itself, he repeated one of the old ones.

At times he stopped to get his breath, but the moment he did so the beast began to stir uneasily, and Herb hastily resumed.

Every moment he hoped to hear the shout of his comrades, the barking of Hector, the coming of help from some quarter that would draw the attention of the brute and perhaps cause it to flee.

But nothing interfered with that queerest of concerts, and Herb kept on singing.

But now a new terror assailed him. He was growing hoarse. He was weak from the fall, he had shouted repeatedly for his mates. And now his voice was failing.

But he did not dare stop! Those dreadful eyes staring at him told him that he must not!

So he kept on and on, his voice steadily growing weaker, until finally it was just a croak.

Then, of a sudden, it left him altogether!

His mouth kept opening and closing, but despite his desperate efforts, no sound came from it.

For some minutes, as Herb's voice had grown weaker, the wildcat had shown signs of irritation. Now it gave vent to a frightful snarl and began to creep nearer.

Herb gave himself up for lost. In sheer despair he reached into his pocket for his jackknife.

But his hand touched something else, and with that touch new hope surged up in him.

He drew out his harmonica and began to play.

CHAPTER XVIII

A FRENZIED SEARCH

In the meantime, Herb's companions, all unknowing of their comrade's need, were hustling about under the trees in eager competition to see who should get his bag filled first.

It had been arranged that whoever had this luck should give a loud halloo, three times repeated, and that the others would come to him at once, no matter what the condition of their own bags.

Each one was so intent on beating the others that they took no pains to keep together, and in the course of time had scattered over a considerable area.

So when at last Bob, his bag so full that it could not hold another nut, gave the signal agreed upon, he had to wait some time before Joe and Jimmy burst through the undergrowth toward him.

"If I'd only had five minutes longer, I'd have been the one to do the crowing," said Joe, as he showed his bag, filled almost to the top.

"It's harder for me to stoop than it is for you fellows," was Jimmy's excuse for coming in third in the race.

"Wonder what's keeping Herb," said Joe.

"Perhaps he got farther off than the rest of us," suggested Jimmy. "Give him the signal again, Bob, and perhaps this time he'll hear it."

Bob lifted up his voice again, but they listened in vain for any sound of Herb's approach.

"Probably he's thinking up another of his bum jokes to spring on us," said Joe. "Get that hatchet out of the kit, Jimmy, and we'll crack some of these nuts and sample them while we're waiting."

The samples proved so good that they were followed by a general craving for more, and the boys were so engrossed in extracting and eating the kernels that nothing further was said about Herb's absence.

Jimmy, Herb's particular chum, was the first to become uneasy.

"It's queer that Herb hasn't come," he said. "Let's all shout together, fellows, and perhaps that'll bring him."

Several times the boys shouted in chorus, but no response came from their errant comrade.

"Do you think anything could have happened to him?" asked Bob.

"What could happen to him up here?" scoffed Joe, pretending less uneasiness than he really felt.

"I don't know," confessed Bob. "But there are rattlers and copperheads in these hills. He may have stepped on one of them. If he has, you know what that would mean."

"Gee, I hadn't thought of that!" exclaimed Joe, starting up in alarm. "Let's get busy and look for him."

It was arranged that each boy should give frequent calls, so that they themselves might keep in touch with each other, as well as elicit, perhaps, some response from Herb.

For nearly half an hour the three lads ranged the woods without finding the slightest trace of their missing companion. Then, thoroughly alarmed by this time, they gathered for a conference.

"If we don't find him soon, we'll have to go back and give a general alarm and have a hunt made for him," said Bob. "He may have broken a leg and be lying helpless and unconscious somewhere."

"I've already given the tip to a couple of hunters I met, and they said they'd be on the lookout for him," said Joe. "But we'll have to get a lot of others on the job, if we don't come across him soon."

"Look at Hector!" exclaimed Jimmy. "What's the matter with the old scout?"

The dog was pulling at the leg of Jimmy's trousers and kept up a continual whining.

"He knows that we're in trouble about something, and it makes him worried too," conjectured Joe.

"It's more than that," declared Bob. "He's trying to tell us something."

"What is it, old scout?" asked Jimmy, stooping down and patting the dog's head.

Hector gave a short bark, ran off a little way, looked back to see if he was being followed, and as the boys stood looking at him in wonder, he again ran back and began to tug at Jimmy's clothes.

"He's found out something," cried Bob. "He wants to take us somewhere. Maybe he knows where Herb is, or at any rate has smelled out his trail."

The lads set out with the dog, and Hector, with glad barks at having made them understand, led them rapidly to the brink of the ravine into which Herb had fallen.

They turned pale and shuddered as they gathered close to the edge and leaned over to see its depth.

"Could he have fallen down there?" asked Bob, his voice shaking.

"I'm afraid he may have," answered Joe, no less stirred with anxiety and grief.

"What's that?" exclaimed Jimmy suddenly, as a faint sound floated up to him. "It sounds like music."

The three boys held their breath while they listened.

There, sure enough, was a thin, tenuous strain of music coming up from the depths below.

"It's Herb's harmonica," cried Bob, after a moment's intent listening. "Thank fortune, he's alive!"

Each felt that a thousand-ton weight had been lifted from his heart. But the relief they felt did not diminish their perplexity.

"What does it mean?" asked Jimmy. "It can't be that the old boy is trying to play a joke on us."

"Nothing like that," replied Bob. "For some reason he can't call, and he's playing that to guide us to him, wherever he is."

He threw himself flat at the edge of the precipice.

"Herb!" he shouted, with all his might. "Herb! What has happened to you? Where are you? We're coming to help you."

There was no answering shout, but the music ceased for a moment, as though the player were listening. Then the strains were hastily resumed.

This time the lads could distinguish the tune familiar to all of them:

"Abide with me, fast falls the eventide."

Bob dashed the tears from his eyes.

"You bet we'll stay with you, old scout," he cried brokenly. "Come along, fellows. Herb's down there in trouble. For some reason he can't answer us. We've got to find some way to get down into that ravine."

It was impossible to get down from where they were, and they hunted about frantically until they found a place where the ravine, instead of being sheer, sloped outward a little. It was steep and dangerous going, even at that, but the boys paid no attention to scratches and bruises, and slid, rolled, and stumbled until at last they found themselves at the bottom.

Once there, they followed the strain of the music, fainter now than it had been, until they found themselves at the foot of the tree where Herb was held a captive.

They looked up into the branches, and what they saw froze them with horror!

CHAPTER XIX

JUST IN TIME

THERE sat poor Herb, pale and exhausted, scarcely able to hold the harmonica to his lips, and there, crouched on the branch only a few feet away, lay the lithe body of the wildcat.

The boys were not only struck with terror at their comrade's plight, but bewildered at the scene that met their eyes. Why had the beast halted? Why was Herb playing? Bob was the first to sense the situation.

"Keep quiet, fellows," he said. "In some way that music is holding the cat at bay. Hunt around and find the heaviest clubs you can."

There was no difficulty in finding sticks, and in a trice the boys were armed with weapons as heavy as they could swing. They felt the inadequacy of these against such a foe, but it was all they had. There was the bare chance of stunning the brute for a moment, and then following up their advantage by a rain of blows that might kill it.

Hector was the last to discover the wildcat, which was lucky, for it enabled them to get armed before the dog, detecting the foe, set up a furious barking.

The wildcat leaped to its feet with a snarl that showed all its fangs, and its sinister eyes shone with fury.

For a moment it seemed undecided as to whether to spring on Herb or to make front against its new foes. But its instinct told it that the real danger threatened from below, and it flattened itself against the bough, while its wicked eyes glared at the newcomers.

"Brace, fellows!" shouted Bob. "The beast's coming!"

The wildcat launched himself into the air.

Two shots rang out, so close together that they sounded like one explosion.

The beast whirled round and round and fell in a heap at Bob's feet. He writhed about convulsively for a moment, and then straightened out and lay still.

Simultaneously, two hunters emerged from the bushes and came toward the boys, who stood open-mouthed, dazed at the sudden turn of events. Joe recognized them as the two hunters he had met while he was searching for Herb.

"Got him all right," remarked one of them, as he touched the body with his foot. "Not so bad

for shooting on the wing, so to speak, eh, Tom?"

"You said it, Ed," replied the other. "I don't know which of us plugged him. Maybe both. We'll find that out when we come to skin him. I guess we just happened along at the right time," he said, turning with a friendly smile toward the Radio Boys.

"You surely did!" replied Bob. "We don't know how to thank you enough. We were going to try to do the best we could, but we only had these clubs."

"Mighty plucky youngsters to tackle a wildcat with clubs, if you ask me," put in the first speaker. "That fellow was a combination of poison and chain lightning. He'd have clawed you into mincemeat before you could have said Jack Robinson."

"Likely enough," replied Bob. "But now let's get Herb down out of the tree."

He started to climb the tree, followed closely by Joe. They soon reached the lower branches. From there they worked their way out carefully to Herb, released him from the twigs that held him, and with infinite care got him down on the ground.

Herb tried to smile, but it was a sorry effort. He opened his mouth, but could speak only in a whisper.

"There now," said Bob, as they seated him on

the ground with his back against the tree. "Don't try to speak till you're a little stronger."

The hunters were all interest and sympathy, and listened with exclamations of surprise as Bob told him his surmises about the way Herb had held the wildcat off.

"Something new on me!" exclaimed one of them. "Wouldn't feel as comfortable with a harmonica as with a shotgun. But that boy certainly had his brains and nerve with him. I have to hand it to him. Let's see, you're the boys who are staying at Lon Owens' farm, aren't you?"

Bob replied in the affirmative.

"I thought as much," was the reply. "We're glad to know you. Our place is only a little way from the Owens farm. My name is Ed Dalney, and this is my brother Tom."

Bob acknowledged the introduction, and in turn introduced his companions.

"Met Lon this morning," went on Ed. "He stopped me and told me about the way you did up the Lasher boys and the new pals that are boarding with them. Glad of it too, for those fellows are pesky nuisances, and they've been due for a licking for some time. The decent people round here owe you a vote of thanks. But what are we going to do with this fellow?" he asked, as he pointed toward the wildcat.

"Why, he's yours," replied Bob. "One of you or both of you shot him."

"I suppose that's so," replied Ed. "Still, it seems to me he ought to belong by good rights to the young fellow that held him off so long."

Herb shook his head.

"He says," reported Bob, as he bent down to hear Herb's whisper, "that he's seen enough of that wicked face, and never wants to look at it again."

Ed and Tom Dalney both laughed.

"Can't say I blame him much," Tom said.

"The only redeeming thing about him was that he had an ear for music," said Ed, with a grin. "Well, as you don't want him, we'll lug him off home. He's been doing a lot of mischief round here lately, and I'm glad we bagged him. I think I'll have a jacket made of that skin for the winter. Let's get a pole, Tom, and string him up."

The two Dalneys picked up a stout branch which they fashioned into a pole and to which they strung the brute by its feet. Then they shouldered the pole and moved off with their burden, after hearty farewells on both sides.

"Those fellows certainly did come along just in the nick of time," remarked Bob, as he watched their retreating figures. "That wildcat would

probably have mussed us up a lot before he got through with us."

"We'd have felt as if we were in front of a buzz saw, for a fact," declared Joe. "But nothing matters now that we've got good old Herb with us again," and he patted their rescued comrade affectionately upon the back.

"How are you feeling now, old boy?" asked Jimmy solicitously.

"I'm all right," replied Herb hoarsely, his voice this time being audible. "There's nothing broken, but I'm pretty sore and stiff. But that will pass after I've rested a little."

"Perhaps I'd better go over to the farm and get Uncle Lon to come back with his wagon," suggested Joe.

"No," said Herb, "Uncle Lon and his wife would be scared to death and think things were worse than they are. You fellows can help me a little and I'll get home without much trouble."

"It was a mighty tough deal you got," said Jimmy.

"Yes," agreed Herb. "But," he added, with a touch of his old gayety, "the cat got worse. He had to listen to my singing."

CHAPTER XX

THE RUSH OF THE TORRENT

THERE was a laugh at Herb's reference to his singing and the tension was broken. If Herb could joke, nothing serious could be the matter with him.

"Not to mention your playing," put in Jimmy, with a grin.

Herb sat up with a start and felt in his pockets.

"What did I do with that harmonica?" he ejaculated, as he felt about fruitlessly. "I must have dropped it when I saw you fellows coming. I wouldn't lose it for a farm."

The boys searched for it under the tree, and finally found it hidden under a tuft of grass. Herb handled it caressingly and put it carefully into his pocket.

"Going to have it framed?" grinned Joe.

"I feel like it," answered Herb. "I don't know what I'd have done without it when my voice gave out. Likely enough it saved my life."

"Since we've got to stay here for a while for Herb to get stronger, what's the matter with having our lunch?" asked Jimmy, whose appetite, in abeyance for a while, now began to make its demands felt.

"No reason why we shouldn't," replied Bob. "We'll draw straws to see who'll go up on the hill and get the lunch basket."

"Two of us had better go, and at the same time we can bring down the bags of nuts. It would be a pity to lose them after all the trouble we took to get them."

They drew straws, and luck declared against Joe and Jimmy. It was a long and hard climb to get back to the place of their former rendezvous, but their hearts were so light at the rescue of Herb that they went without grumbling, and were soon back laden with spoils.

They made a hearty meal, and Herb could feel his strength coming back to him by the minute. Hector was not forgotten, and was so fed and petted that he strutted about proudly, feeling that he was the hero of the occasion.

"It sure was a lucky day when we took this old fellow off the derelict," remarked Bob, as he tossed Hector a sandwich, which he bolted in one gulp.

"You bet it was," agreed Jimmy. "He saved me from the polar bear, and to-day he led us to

the ravine. He's all wool and a yard wide. Aren't you, Hector, old boy?"

Hector gave a bark that was an admission that he was all he was said to be.

"We'll have to give Herb a new name now," joked Jimmy. "We'll have to call him little Tommy Tucker."

"Oh, I have it all over Tommy," replied Herb, grinning. "He was only singing for his supper, but I was singing for my life."

"I've often heard that 'music has charms to soothe the savage breast,' but I never expected to see Herb prove it," laughed Bob.

"Did you say music?" asked Jimmy. "Are you referring to Herb's singing or to the harmonica?"

"It doesn't matter which you give the credit to," put in Joe. "Herb turned the trick, and that's all that counts."

By the time they had finished the lunch, Herb began to feel himself again, and after resting a while longer the Radio Boys retraced their steps to the farm, Herb limping along and aiding himself by leaning on the shoulders of his companions.

There was a cry that was almost a shriek from Mrs. Owens as she looked up at their entrance into the kitchen.

"What on earth has happened?" she cried,

dropping her sewing and coming hastily to the side of Herb, as the boys let him down into a rocking chair.

"Nothing serious," Bob said reassuringly. "Herb's pretty well bunged up, but it's nothing worse than the shock and some bruises."

Then, as Mrs. Owens bustled about ministering to Herb, he told her briefly what had happened.

She listened with many ejaculations of surprise and sympathy.

"The poor dear boy!" she exclaimed, as she bathed his face and made him drink some herb tea. "To think of all he's been through! Up in that tree with that dreadful creature and never knowing what minute the beast was goin' to spring on him! Oh, it's awful! I'll send for Dr. Jessup right away."

But Herb protested so strongly, telling her that he was all right and that at any rate she was better than any doctor she could get, that she finally yielded.

"Well, if I'm going to be your doctor, you've got to mind me," she said. "You go right up to bed and stay there and don't get out of it till to-morrow morning."

Herb went through the form of objecting, but, in truth, he was pretty well worn out, and he yielded to her gentle tyranny. The other boys took him upstairs, rubbed him with arnica, and

put him to bed, where he fell speedily into a sleep from which he did not wake until the following morning.

Uncle Lon was almost as perturbed as his wife had been when he came in from the fields that evening and learned what had happened.

"A wildcat is mighty bad medicine," he declared. "There ain't a more vicious thing on the face of the earth, except, maybe, a rattlesnake. They'd claw you to pieces in no time. There used to be a lot of them around here, but now you only see them once in a while. It was mighty lucky that Ed and Tom Dalney happened to come along."

"I tell you we felt good when we heard those shots," said Joe. "We might have knocked out the brute with our clubs, but then again we mightn't."

"The chances are you wouldn't," replied Uncle Lon. "The wildcat is as quick as lightning at dodgin', and when your club came down he probably wouldn't have been there. In the meantime he'd have been clawing one or the other of you to bits. No," he said, shaking his head, "the only time I crave to see a wildcat is when he's dead."

Again that night the rain set in, and it was a sodden world the boys looked out upon when they got up the next morning.

They felt disinclined to go out that day, and the boys spent most of their time in tinkering with the radio set and looking over the radio magazines which they had had forwarded to them from Clintonia.

"What won't radio be doing next?" asked Herb, as he looked up from an article he was reading, lying stretched out on the lounge.

"No telling," responded Bob. "Nothing would surprise me, not even if we should be able to talk to Mars. But what is it now? Shoot."

"It's these experiments they've been making in the coal mines," replied Herb. "Seems that they've been able now to send the ether waves through the crust of the earth away down in the mines, so that the miners can talk to the men on the surface just as easily as though they were standing within a foot of them."

"I tell you there's no limit," said Joe. "First thing you know, they'll be sending signals straight through to China on the other side."

"Must make it mighty convenient for the mine bosses to be kept right in touch with their men that way," remarked Jimmy.

"Yes, but that isn't the main thing," replied Herb. "Think of what a great thing it will be in case of accidents."

"That's so," agreed Bob. "Half the trouble now when there's a mine explosion is to know

where the trapped men are. The rescue parties can only guess at it, and they may be going in the wrong direction, while the poor fellows are choking and starving to death."

"I thought that most of the mines were equipped with telephones now," hazarded Joe.

"So they are," said Herb. "But when there's an explosion the blast usually shatters the wires and puts the telephone out of business. But it can't stop the radio waves from going through. The men on the surface can keep right in touch with the imprisoned miners, tell them help is coming and put new heart and strength in them."

"I can see that all right," said Jimmy. "But suppose the men in the mine haven't any radio set with them to answer back and tell where they are?"

"The idea is," explained Herb, "that at different places in the mine there shall be what they call 'refuge chambers,' so placed that the men will be pretty certain to be able to get to one of them if an explosion happens. In each of these chambers there will be a powerful sending and receiving set, as well as food and water. The set will be placed near one of the pipe lines that run through the mines."

"What's that for?" asked Jimmy.

"Because they've found that the signals are stronger when they're near these carriers," replied

Herb, referring to his article. "You see, this is a sort of 'wired-wireless' combination. The radio would get through anyway, but it's much fainter when it's at a distance from some of these wires and pipes. The one helps the other."

"Suppose the pipes themselves are broken by the explosion?" put in Joe.

"They've found that the signals will leap the gaps," was the reply.

"Trust old radio to get through some way or other," said Bob enthusiastically. "What can't it do? Where can't it go? Here it is, going down into the depths of the earth. But it goes just as easily into the skies and talks to the aviator above the clouds. Or it flashes across the sea and saves vessels and their crews. There you are! The earth, the sea and the sky! You can't put any limit to it. Gee, fellows, what we'd have missed if we'd been born in any other age of the world!"

"Showed mighty good judgment on our part," laughed Jimmy.

All that day it rained as though it would never stop. And again the anxious creases appeared on Uncle Lon's brow.

Through all the night and the next day the storm continued, and the boys began to chafe under their forced inactivity. And, despite their youthful light-heartedness, some of Uncle Lon's

uneasiness began to filter into their own minds.

On the third day the rain let up a little, and Uncle Lon announced his intention of going to town to make some needed purchases.

The Radio Boys clamored for the privilege of going along with him.

"Sure you can," replied Uncle Lon genially. "You've been cooped up a long time and a breath of fresh air will do you good. Pile in."

They "piled in" the car with alacrity, and started along the muddy road to Bottville.

As it neared the town, the road wound close to the creek, which was no longer the placid stream it had been when the boys first saw it. It was a turbid torrent, yellow from the soil that had been washed into it, and running bank-full, with a sullen, menacing roar that carried with it some of the malignity of a wild beast.

Bob, who was sitting on the side of the car nearest the creek, leaned out to get a better look. As he did so, a terrific roar burst on his ears.

He looked back. Tearing down upon them was a mighty wall of water twenty feet high, churning, tossing, tumbling!

CHAPTER XXI

AT THE MERCY OF THE FLOOD

Bob jumped up with a wild shout of alarm. The next instant the flood was upon them!

It struck the car with the force of a thunderbolt, carrying it along as though it were a feather and hurling its occupants into the seething waters.

The waves closed over them. After what seemed an interminable time the boys rose to the surface, choking, sputtering, to be borne along like chips on the bosom of the torrent.

The disaster had come so suddenly that they were dazed and bewildered, and the first efforts they made to keep themselves afloat were dictated by instinct rather than reason.

Luckily, all the Radio Boys were good swimmers. And not only that, but most of their swimming had been at Ocean Point, where their antagonists had been the ocean waves and the breakers. This had toughened them as no practice in still waters would ever have done. And now a time had come when they needed to put

in use all they had learned in battling with the billows.

It was fortunate that they had all been thrown clear of the automobile, without coming in contact with anything to stun them.

Bob shook the water from his eyes and looked about for his companions. His heart leaped with thankfulness as he saw three heads bobbing like corks on the surface of the torrent.

But it sank like lead as he scanned the surface and saw nothing of his Uncle Lon. Terror seized him. He had grown very fond of the genial old farmer, who had done so much to make them all happy. Was it possible that he would never see the old man again alive?

The answer came a moment later when Uncle Lon's gray head appeared above the water a little way ahead of the lad. Two arms beat the water feebly. Bob caught a glimpse of the eyes and noted that they were glassy and unseeing. Then the head disappeared.

With a prayer in his heart, Bob dived after his uncle. The water was so muddy that he could not see clearly. But as he felt frantically about he touched an arm that was limp and inert.

Bob caught it, reached for the body, and rose to the surface. There was no need of taking any precautions against being gripped and rendered helpless by the drowning man. He was a dead

weight on Bob's arm. Probably a floating log had struck him and rendered him unconscious.

If he had been in still water, Bob would have had no difficulty in reaching the shore with his helpless burden. But now, in the terrific clutch of the torrent, it was almost impossible to swim at right angles to it. He had to content himself with holding Uncle Lon's head above the water while with the other arm he kept them both afloat and avoided as far as possible the logs and driftwood that were being borne along on the surface.

How long he could keep this up, he did not know. His strength was being taxed beyond endurance. But he knew in his heart that he would never let go his burden. If Uncle Lon went down, he, Bob, would go down with him.

A little way ahead of them the branches of a large tree projected over the water. Bob kept his eyes on them, and, as far as he could, edged nearer so as to pass beneath them.

As he was swept along under the boughs, he stretched his arm upwards and clutched one of the branches. The flood tugged at him savagely, as though it would wrench his arm from the socket, but he held on desperately.

Just then another arm shot up alongside of him and grasped the branch.

"I'm here, Bob," came in Joe's voice. "I'll take Uncle Lon while you rest a minute."

Bob relinquished his burden to his chum.

"Just in time, Joe," he said, with unutterable thankfulness. "I'd have had to let go the branch in another minute. Where are Herb and Jimmy?"

"They're all right," Joe reassured him. "I saw them creeping out on a spur of land that jutted into the creek. We don't have to worry about them. But how are we going to get Uncle Lon to shore?"

"We'll have to work our way with him along this branch," replied Bob. "Just hold him till I get my breath and then we'll set to work."

Joe was fresh as compared with his chum, and he sustained his burden without much difficulty.

"Now," said Bob, after a moment, "I'll hold him while you work along the branch a foot or two. Then you can take him while I do the same."

Just beyond the trunk of the tree there was a high knoll that reared itself like an island above the maddened waters.

Towards this the boys made their way with infinite toil and many pauses to rest on the way. But at last they felt the land under their feet, and never was touch more welcome.

It was a comparatively easy task then to lay their helpless burden on the part of the knoll that had escaped the flood.

Without losing a moment, they set to work on the first aid treatment that they had more than once seen and taken part in at Ocean Point, and at last were rewarded by seeing Uncle Lon open his eyes.

They closed again, but reopened after a moment and looked up into the faces of the boys with bewilderment. He tried to speak, but Bob stopped him.

"Not now, Uncle Lon," he said. "Just lie there till you get back a little of your strength. You'll be all right pretty soon."

In a little while the old man was able to sit up and look around him.

"So the flood came at last," he murmured weakly. "You see my hunch wasn't so far wrong after all. The dam broke, did it?"

"Oh, no, this isn't from the dam," corrected Bob. "That's all right as far as we know. This flood came along the creek."

"The creek?" replied Uncle Lon. "I never thought that would get as high as this. There must have been a cloudburst up in the mountains. But if there has been, that will affect the dam too," he added.

"Well, it hasn't yet, and we'll hope it won't," Bob said reassuringly. "This is bad enough."

"How did I happen to get here?" asked Uncle Lon. "Last thing I remember after bein' thrown

out of the car was that I was swimmin'. And then I didn't know anything."

"Guess you must have been hit by a log," said Joe. "You've got a bad bump there on your temple. It must have been that that knocked you out. Bob saw you sinking and dived for you."

Uncle Lon caught Bob's hand and pressed it with gratitude.

"Joe did as much as I did," said Bob. "Without him, I could never have got you to land."

"You're both brave boys!" exclaimed Uncle Lon. "And I'll never forget it. Where are the other boys?"

"They're safe somewhere," replied Joe. "I saw them reach land. I'll just take a look around and see if I can catch sight of them."

He walked toward the edge of the temporary island. Then suddenly he jumped back with a shout.

He had almost stepped on a huge rattlesnake!

As the ugly reptile caught sight of Joe it threw itself into a coil like lightning and sounded its rattle while its malignant eyes glinted like sparks of fire from the triangular-shaped head upraised to strike.

Bob jumped to his feet at his companion's shout and came hurrying to his side.

"Back!" warned Joe, setting the example. "It's a rattler!"

Bob leaped back with the rapidity of a flash of light, and it was well that he did, for his first impetuous rush had brought him within striking distance, and the snake had launched out at him.

The stroke missed by a hair's breadth. Instantly the reptile threw itself again into coil, enraged by its failure, while now its rattle kept up a continual whirr.

The boys retreated hastily and looked around for some weapon.

"A rattler, eh?" exclaimed Uncle Lon, rising weakly to his feet. "My, but he's a whopper! He's been brought down from his den by the flood."

Another rattle sounded near by, and Uncle Lon jumped with surprising agility in another direction. A second snake, almost the equal of the first in size, had crawled from a heap of driftwood not more than six feet away.

"The mate of the other," Uncle Lon muttered, as he and the boys scrambled out of reach. "If this keeps on, we'll have to take to the water again."

The reptiles, true to their kind, made no movement in advance, but held themselves warily alert, sounding their challenge.

"Lucky they're not moccasins," said Uncle Lon, "or they'd chase us with their mouths open and even follow us into the water. But we've

got to get rid of these fellows right quick. There may be a heap of them in that driftwood."

"Better get out of here while the getting's good," suggested Joe, with a suspicious look toward the pile of driftwood.

"Good idea," agreed Bob. "Two rattlers in the same day are plenty. I know when I've had enough. Gee, another inch and that first fellow would have had me!"

Uncle Lon was stronger now, and they waded out on the further side of the little island until they reached a part of the mainland which the flood had not touched.

Far off, in the direction of Bottville, they could hear the shriek of whistles and the clangor of bells, a din that was charged with panic terror.

Uncle Lon's face grew grave and sorrowful.

"The flood has reached Bottville!" he exclaimed. "That creek runs right through the center of the town. What will the poor people do when that wall of water rushes down on them?"

CHAPTER XXII

A DESPERATE FIGHT

"We've got to help those people in Bottville!" cried Bob, as he visioned the disaster. "Come along, Joe."

"I'll go with you," said Uncle Lon.

But he swayed dizzily as he spoke and Bob seized hold of his arm to steady him.

"You mustn't," he said. "You've been half-drowned, and you're still weak from that blow on the head. You must get home as soon as possible."

Just then a team came along, in the driver of which Bob recognized Tom Dalney. The latter stopped instantly as he saw the bedraggled group.

"Tom," asked Bob eagerly, "will you take Uncle Lon home? He's been hurt in the flood and his car has been carried away."

"Sure thing," said Tom heartily, as he got down and helped Uncle Lon into his seat. "I was on my way to Bottville to see what I could do. But I'll hurry Mr. Owens home in a jiffy, and then I'll come back."

Uncle Lon still protested, but Tom whipped up his horses and made off in the direction of the Owens farm.

"Now," said Bob, "it's us for Bottville as fast as our legs can take us there."

He had scarcely spoken the words before a shout came from down the road, and in a moment Herb and Jimmy rushed up to them and fairly hugged them in their delight.

"Thanks be!" ejaculated Herb.

"We lost sight of you and thought you were goners," cried Jimmy.

"Those born to be hung can never be drowned," joked Bob. "But now, fellows, we've got our work cut out for us. We've got to work like beavers and help the poor people down there all we can. It isn't much more than a mile away, and we ought to be there in less than ten minutes."

The boys set out on a run. Their wet clothes impeded them, but this only made them redouble their efforts. A further spur was given when a long sheet of flame suddenly mounted into the sky.

"Fire is adding its horrors to those of flood!" cried Joe.

When the Radio Boys reached the outskirts of the town their hearts stood still within them as they saw the full extent of the calamity.

The torrent had rushed down the main street of the place, carrying devastation in its wake.

The more solidly built of the brick and stone structures had withstood the flood's fury. But frame houses had crumpled and gone down like houses of cards. Some had been carried off their foundations and were floating down the valley, while at their upper windows or on their roofs men and women and children were huddled together.

The railroad station was under water. Cars had been torn from the tracks and lay on their sides. Large parts of the tracks themselves had been washed away.

The din was terrific. Bells were clanging, whistles were blowing, men were shouting, women were screaming, children were wailing.

The yeasty surface of the flood was strewn with all sorts of débris. Bodies of cattle, borne by the flood from the farms along its course, were swirling about in the eddies. Hencoops floated by full of drowned fowls. Here and there a cow or a horse was swimming about, vainly looking for some place to land. Domestic animals, cats, and dogs, were numbered among the victims.

Most of the people in the houses had been able to get to the upper floors and were beyond the reach of the water. But even this only promised

temporary safety. None knew at what moment the foundations, undermined, might give way. And in the case of the houses already afloat there was no knowing when the houses would topple and spill the people on their roofs into the water.

At several points houses had caught fire, and it was there that the danger was most terrible. There was no possibility of subduing the flames, as the fire department was of course useless. The only recourse left to the inmates was to take their choice between burning and the chance of drowning if they leaped into the water.

All these things the Radio Boys took in at a glance. For a moment the horror of it almost paralyzed them. Then they sprang into action.

"Come along, fellows!" shouted Bob, leading the way. "We've got to work now as we never worked before!"

They rushed down the street, which was steep at that point, until they reached the edge of the flood. There they looked about frantically for some sort of boat.

But whatever boats there were had already been commandeered by some of the men of the town, who were rowing about from house to house, taking off the marooned people and conveying them to higher ground that the flood had not reached.

A massive oak door that looked as though it

might have been torn from the hinges of a public garage came floating by.

Without an instant's hesitation, Bob plunged into the water, got hold of one end of it and steered it to dry land.

"Here we are, fellows," he panted. "Now get some flat boards that we can handle and use them as oars."

Just then a baby carriage came floating by. A faint wail came to the startled ears of the boys.

"Great Scott!" cried Bob. "There's a baby!" and he plunged again into the water.

He swam to the front of the carriage and looked under the hood. There lay a very frightened baby, its big eyes wet with tears and its little fists waving.

Bob reached in a wet hand and patted the little one.

"You're all right now, kid," he said. "We'll have you in a drier place in jig time."

He propelled the carriage toward the shore, took out the baby, confided it to a woman in the throng on the edge of the flood, and in a moment was back with his mates.

They had equipped themselves with the best boards they could find, and with these rude paddles they pushed off into the flood.

For many hours they worked, paddling the raft where the danger seemed most pressing, taking

people from burning houses, rescuing others from upper floors and roofs, and when they had secured as big a load as their craft could carry, bearing it to the shore, to return at once to their labors.

The perspiration was rolling from them in streams and they were ready to drop with fatigue. But they refused to think of themselves while others were in danger, and kept on unflinchingly.

As dusk drew on, Bob caught sight of a house that had floated some distance down the valley, on the roof of which he could see a number of people waving frantically while their frightened shouts were borne to his ears.

"That house looks as though it might topple over any minute," he said. "I guess that's our next job."

"Looks that way," agreed Joe.

The Radio Boys propelled the raft as fast as they could toward the imperiled group, their efforts spurred on by the certainty that the house was about to turn over. It was gradually careening, and already the people on it had been obliged to throw themselves flat on the steeply sloping roof that no longer afforded them a foothold.

"Hurry, fellows, hurry!" urged Bob, he himself using his paddle with such desperate energy that it threatened to break.

"Am hurrying," grunted Jimmy.

In a few minutes the Radio Boys got near enough to see the frightened faces looking toward them.

"Well, look who's here!" exclaimed Herb.

"By the great horn spoon!" ejaculated Jimmy, as he caught sight of them. "It's Buck Looker and his gang!"

CHAPTER XXIII

THE DAM IS BREAKING

JIMMY had scarcely spoken when the house to which the Radio Boys' enemies were clinging turned over, throwing the people from the roof into the water.

A chorus of frightened shouts was checked by the sudden immersion, but was renewed a moment later when head after head popped out of the water.

"Keep count, fellows!" cried Bob. "There were seven in that bunch. Make sure you get them all."

"There was one woman in the party," said Herb.

The rescuers supposed her, and rightly, to be Mrs. Lasher. She came up near the raft, and Bob and Joe grabbed her and pulled her up. Mr. Lasher came next, and then followed the three Lasher boys and Carl Lutz.

"Six," counted Bob, looking the bedraggled group over. "Who's missing?"

"It's Buck Looker!" exclaimed Jimmy.

Just then Buck's head appeared, but the boy made no effort to swim and sank again.

In an instant Bob had dived overboard. He clutched Buck and came up close to the raft, where willing hands relieved him of his burden.

"Probably hit his head in falling," Bob said briefly, as he clambered aboard. "He'll be all right in a minute. Now, fellows, for the shore."

But the raft was loaded so heavily that it was almost submerged, and despite their utmost efforts it was impossible to make headway.

"No use," pronounced Bob, after several vain attempts. "Some of us will have to go overboard. Mr. Lasher," he said, addressing the head of the family, "suppose you and your boys take the paddles. My friends and I can swim like ducks, and we're already so wet that we can't get any wetter. We'll swim along by the raft or behind it."

This solution seemed the only one in sight, and the Radio Boys went into the water, while the rest paddled the raft to shore.

Mr. and Mrs. Lasher were profuse in their thanks to their rescuers. The Lasher boys, too, though less vocal, were really grateful. The elder one, the same who had provoked the fight in the woods, stepped awkwardly forward.

"That was a raw deal we handed to you fellows

the other day," he said, flushing a dull red. "I'm ashamed of it, and so are my brothers. You fellows are the real cheese."

"Oh, that's all right," replied Bob, with a smile, and his mates acquiesced. "We don't bear any malice. And we're mighty glad that we were able to help you just now."

Lutz too mumbled something that the Radio Boys could barely catch, but that they interpreted as rather ungracious thanks.

Buck was the last off the raft. He had been told by the others that Bob had dived over for him, and he was unusually subdued.

"I—I'm thankful for what you did for me," he said haltingly to Bob. "And—and I own up that I was the fellow that was behind that telephone message the night you got back to Clintonia. I'm sorry, and I apologize for it."

"Well," said Bob, "a fellow can't do more than apologize. I was pretty sore at the time, but that's all over. I'm willing to let bygones be bygones."

The party passed on, and the Radio Boys looked at each other.

"Am I dreaming?" asked Herb. "Think of Buck Looker apologizing for anything! I'd as soon think of Jimmy going without eating."

Jimmy favored his chum with a contemptuous stare.

"Both things seem impossible, for a fact," remarked Joe. "Let's hope he'll be a different fellow from now on."

"Can the leopard change his spots?" asked Jimmy skeptically.

"Oh, well, let's give him the benefit of the doubt, anyway," said Bob generously. "And now, fellows, I guess we can call it a day. I think every one who was in danger has been taken care of by this time. Let's hike back to the farm and supper."

"Supper!" exclaimed Jimmy. "Where have I heard that word before?"

They were bracing themselves for the long tramp ahead of them when they met Tom Dalney, who himself had been working hard at rescue and was now ready to climb into his wagon.

"Just in time," he said, with a friendly smile. "Jump in and I'll drop you off at the Owens place."

"Will we?" exclaimed Bob, setting the example. "Jump is our middle name!"

"You fellows must be dead tired, after the way you worked to-day," observed Tom, as they drove along. "Everybody was talking about it and wanting to know who you were."

"The best we could do was little enough," said Bob soberly. "That was an awful thing to happen to the town."

"It sure was," agreed Tom. "Lucky, though, that a good part of the houses were on the higher ground on each side of the valley. It was the business section that caught the worst of it. There's been thousands of dollars worth of damage done there; though, as far as I've heard, no lives were lost."

"I suppose the whole country is ringing with it by this time," conjectured Bob.

"Don't think the outside world knows anything about it yet," answered Tom. "You see, all the telegraph and telephone lines are down. Bottville is practically marooned from all the rest of the world. I tell you it's a mighty ticklish situation, if anything else should happen."

"It seems to me that the worst has already happened," said Bob, somewhat surprised.

"Maybe so, maybe not," was the reply. "I hope so. But the flood to-day isn't a circumstance to what would happen if the dam should break."

"The dam!" exclaimed Bob, with an unpleasant thrill. He had forgotten all about that menace in the stirring events of the day. "You don't think it's likely to, do you?"

"I hope not," replied Tom, evading a direct answer. "But they're mighty worried about it down in Bottville. They're working like mad to get the telegraph and telephone lines in use again.

They figure that the rains that set the creek on a rampage aren't going to do the lake behind the dam any good."

Bob shuddered inwardly. He had already seen the havoc wrought by the cloudburst moving along the channel of a narrow creek. He did not dare think of what would happen if the millions, the hundreds of millions, of gallons behind the dam should burst their bounds and come sweeping down over the hapless valley.

It was getting dark now. They had almost reached the Owens farm when some distance ahead they saw the lights of an automobile. It was coming down the road at a reckless pace, swaying and bounding as it struck the rough places.

"That fellow's breaking all the speed laws!" muttered Tom, as he prudently drew his horses to the side of the road.

On came the car at the same breakneck speed.

As it passed the wagon a head was thrust out and a hoarse voice shouted:

"The dam is breaking! The dam is breaking! Flee for your lives!"

CHAPTER XXIV

TO THE RESCUE

A THRILL of terror ran through all those in the wagon. Their nerves were on edge anyway, and this seemed the climax.

Bob was the first to speak.

"He didn't say that it was broken!" he cried. "He just said it was breaking. It may hold till we can get help. Whip up the horses, Tom, and get to Uncle Lon's place."

Tom did as requested and put his horses into a gallop.

"He's safe enough," he remarked. "His house is high enough on the hill to escape the flood if it comes. You'll all be safe enough there."

"We won't be there," cried Bob. "We'll be down in Bottville."

Tom looked at him in bewilderment, but Bob's face was set and grim, and he said no more. If the rest of the Radio Boys were equally perplexed, they gave no sign. They had long been accustomed to follow Bob's leadership, and they were

perfectly willing to help him in any of his plans.

In a very few minutes, they had reached the Owens place. The boys jumped down.

"Will you wait here a minute, Tom?" pleaded Bob.

Tom assented, and the boys rushed into the house, where they found the farmer and his wife in a state of considerable agitation, though Mrs. Owens had not neglected to provide a good supper, which now stood smoking on the table.

"Oh, I'm glad you boys are here!" she exclaimed. "We've been waiting supper for you ever so long, and we were worried to death for fear something had happened to you."

"Awfully sorry, Aunt Sally," said Bob. "But I'm afraid we can't wait for supper now. We'll just cram some bread and cheese, or whatever you have handy, in our pockets and we'll be off. Fellows, rip out the radio set and carry it out to the wagon. Don't mind about the batteries. We'll get plenty of power down at the electric light station in Bottville. Hurry, now, hurry!"

The three lads rushed into the sitting room to carry out Bob's directions.

"But, but——" stammered Uncle Lon. "I don't understand."

"It's this way, Uncle Lon," explained Bob rapidly. "An auto just passed us in the road, and the driver was shouting that the dam was

breaking. Don't worry, Aunt Sally," as Mrs. Owens grew pale and put her hand to her throat. "You're safe enough up on this high ground. Now that fellow might have merely been scared to death because he saw some water pouring over the top of the dam, or he may have been telling the truth. But even if the dam is beginning to give way somewhere, it may be hours before it really breaks, and there may be time to get enough men and material there to make it safe. The telephone and telegraph wires are down, and there's no way to get help from outside except by radio. We're going to take our set down to Bottville and put ourselves at the service of the town authorities."

"But if the dam does really break, it will mean death to you down there in Bottville!" exclaimed Aunt Sally, aghast.

"Maybe not," replied Bob. "But, anyway, we've got to do it. Ready, fellows?" he asked, as the radio set was brought into the room. "All right then. Stuff your pockets with grub, and let's take this out to the wagon."

A moment later they were out of the door, where Tom was waiting for them.

"Lend us the team, will you, Tom?" asked Bob, and hastily outlined what he wanted it for.

"Sure, you can have it," replied Tom. "I'll go down with you. I guess if you're game for it, I

am. You sure are plucky young roosters," he added admiringly.

"I didn't want to ask you to come along," explained Bob, as they bestowed the set in the wagon. "I didn't feel I had a right to. I was only going to borrow the team. But if you're willing to drive us down, that will be fine. You know the road, and we'll get there a good deal quicker."

"These old horses have certainly got to earn their feed this night," said Tom, as he gathered up the reins and started his team off at a spanking pace.

The wagon rocked from side to side, and the occupants had to hold on tightly to keep from being thrown into the road. But they thought little of that.

Their ears were intent, strained, listening for the roar from behind them that might tell that the dam was broken and that the flood was rushing down upon them. If it caught them, they were under no illusion as to what it would mean. They were racing with death!

The horses made quicker time that night than they ever had before, and in a surprisingly short time they had reached the outskirts of the town.

As the electric lighting system had been put out of commission the city was practically in darkness. A few lamps glimmered in the houses

that had escaped the flood. From some of the burned buildings a dull red glow came from the embers. Lanterns flitted here and there like fireflies, as men waded about in the shallower portions of the flood, seeking food and blankets for their homeless families, camped out on the higher ground that had escaped the torrent.

To make it worse, there was no moon, and the night was black. It was a picture of grim, hideous desolation that sent a chill to the hearts of the Radio Boys.

But they had no time to dwell on this. Every second was precious, and the horses had barely halted before the boys leaped into the road.

"Now, Tom," said Bob, "you know this town, I suppose, as well as you know your own house. Show us where the electric light plant is. That's where we've got to get the juice for the radio."

"It's just at the end of the main street," replied Tom. "But that's where they got the worst of the flood, and most of it must be under water. Their big dynamo is on the ground floor, and probably it's covered."

"No matter," said Bob. "We've got to get there. That's our only chance. If we can get hold of the engineer, it's ten to one we can get power of some kind."

"All right," returned Tom. "Hello there!" he shouted at the top of his lungs to two men who

were passing in a boat at a little distance. "Come over here! Quick! Hurry!"

Tom's hail was heard, and the boat changed its direction and came quickly toward them.

"Hello, Dave! Hello, Barney!" Tom called, as he recognized the men from the light of the lantern in the stern. "Get these young fellows and their radio set over to the electric light station quick. We heard that the dam was breaking, and this is the only chance to get help. It may be a matter of life and death. Hustle now!"

There was a startled exclamation from the men.

"You bet we will!" ejaculated Dave.

"Tumble in," directed Barney, as he brought the boat broadside on.

In a moment the Radio Boys had lifted their radio set in and had themselves found places in the boat. The rowers bent to their oars, and the boat darted off.

"And in the meantime, Tom," sang out Bob, "scurry around and get the mayor and the other officials of the town. Tell them what you've heard about the dam and hurry them over to us. We want their advice and we need their authority. And while you're doing that, we'll be getting our set in working order."

"I'll do it!" shouted Tom, as his figure was lost in the darkness.

In a few minutes the rowers slackened their pace and brought their boat up beneath the windows of the second story of a substantial brick building, which had been strong enough to withstand the onset of the flood.

"Here it is," announced Dave, as he held the boat steady by grasping the window sill.

In a moment Bob had thrown his leg over the sill and climbed inside. His comrades followed quickly, and then the radio set was handed up by the men in the boat.

"Stick around a minute, will you, until I see if any one's here?" Bob asked his new acquaintances. "We may need your help to hunt up the engineer of the plant."

"Sure thing," replied Barney. "That, or anything else you want."

As the boys looked around they caught a glimmer of light at the further end of the long loft in which they found themselves, and could hear the clink of tools.

They hurried in that direction, and came upon three men, grimy and sweating, laboring at a mass of tangled and broken wires and trying to bring order out of chaos. They suspended their work for a moment as the boys came up to them, and looked at them in surprise.

"What's doing?" asked the tallest of the trio, who seemed to be directing the work.

"Are you the engineer of the plant?" asked Bob breathlessly.

"Yes," was the reply. "My name's Barnett. What is it? Speak up quick, for I'm a mighty busy man."

"I see you are," replied Bob. "And I know how important it is for you to get the lighting system to working. But just now we've heard news that makes something else seem more important. A fellow told us that the dam was breaking!"

"What?" cried Barnett, starting back, while the eyes of his assistants seemed to be bulging from their heads.

"That's what!" affirmed Bob. "We were up near the Owens place—that's where we're staying—and a fellow came tearing by in a car lickety-split, shouting that the dam was giving way. We knew that the telegraph and telephone wires were down, and there was no way for you to get the help you need from outside. So we rushed in, got our radio, and came down here. But some way or other you've got to give us the power."

"You'll get it!" shouted Barnett, as he leaped into action. "The big dynamo is out of commission, but we have a smaller one here that acts as a feeder. We'll have that ready in jig time. Drop that work, boys, and get that dynamo going," he ordered his assistants.

There was no need of a second order. In a moment all three of the men were working with frantic haste. Bob and his mates in the meantime got their set up on a table and saw to it that the adjustments were all right for an instant application of the power as soon as it could be furnished.

They were bending over their work when they heard the sound of hurrying footsteps and, looking up, saw Tom Dalney with three men hastening toward them.

"This is Mayor Milton," said Tom, indicating one of his companions. And these are Councilmen Brady and Ahrens. These are the young fellows I was telling you about, Mr. Milton."

"Mr. Dalney has told us about the danger from the dam," said the mayor, "and of the way you have taken your lives in your hands to come to our help with your radio. We appreciate it more than we can tell. Go right ahead. Use my name and the name of the city in anything you send out, and God bless you."

"That's fine," replied Bob. "We wanted your authority behind us. Mr. Barnett is getting the dynamo ready, and we'll have power in a few minutes. Then we'll get busy, and we'll stay here till the dam breaks or the danger's over. In the meantime, you'll have your hands full in warning the people and in sending every able-

bodied man that can be spared up to the dam to help strengthen it."

"Right," said the mayor. "And, Tom," he added, "suppose you spread the alarm up through the country all the way up to the dam. Get out the farmers and send them up there. We'll get the bells and whistles going here, while these boys try to get help from outside."

With another expression of thanks, the officials and Tom Dalney hurried away. A moment later Barnett and his assistants joined the Radio Boys at the table.

"Got her going!" Barnett exulted, as, together with the boys, he hastily adjusted the wires. "All the juice you want. Let her go!"

And they let her go!

Out through the ether the Radio Boys flung their cry for help, their statement of the desperate state of the city, the threat that existed from the dam, the terrible need for assistance.

Would their cry be heeded? Would help come in time?

CHAPTER XXV

A HARD-WON VICTORY

THAT far-flung call was echoed almost instantly all over the country.

It stirred the nation's heart to sympathy. The telegraph and telephone took it up and repeated it.

It reached Washington, and orders were immediately dispatched to the nearest military post to send a force of engineers to strengthen the dam. It reached the capital of the state, and militiamen were ordered out to guard property, maintain order and apprehend looters. It reached the headquarters of the Red Cross, and instantly that organization set in motion a force of doctors and nurses, together with medicines, blankets, food and tents.

As the Radio Boys toiled, they were conscious that they worked under the shadow of doom. The dam might break at any moment. The lads listened for the roar that would portend the coming of the ocean of water that would overwhelm them and send them to almost certain destruction.

They knew that they were gambling with death. They knew that the odds were against them. But they were gambling for human lives. None of them thought of quitting. They hung to their task with grim tenacity, sending myriads of messages and taking others in reply.

"Now, fellows," said Bob, after the first rush of messages had gone out, "there's no need of more than one of us staying here at any one time. There's plenty of work to be done outside. Barnett and his men will be close at hand in case anything goes wrong with the power. So we'll take turns at the key in one-hour shifts. The other three will hustle outside wherever they can do the most good. At the end of each hour, one of us will come back and the other take his place. Suppose you take the first turn, Joe. Then Herb, Jimmy, and I will come back in that order."

Joe took his place at the table and the others went to the window, where after a short wait they were able to signal a passing rowboat that took them on board and carried them to the edge of the flood.

There they jumped out and joined the army of volunteer workers, who were busy in conveying families and effects from the houses that had escaped the onset of the first flood to the higher ground that alone promised safety.

The news that the dam was threatening to break and add to the general misfortune had spread with lightninglike rapidity, and the panic-stricken people were doing their best to reach safety before the blow should fall.

Little children were being dragged from their beds and hastily clothed with whatever was at hand. Litters and cots bore the sick and aged who were not able to help themselves. Men were shouting, women calling to their broods, children wailing in fear and bewilderment.

Into this whirling maelstrom of human emotions the Radio Boys plunged with all their heart and soul. They were here, there and everywhere, wherever the need seemed greatest, carrying children, bearing litters, soothing the hysterical, expending themselves to the utmost without stint or relaxation.

High hills on each side of the town had been selected as camping sites, and here the wet, miserable and weary inhabitants of the town sought refuge. What tents there were in the city had been hastily pressed into service, but they were wholly insufficient to shelter the multitude, and the great majority had to spend the night in the open, with what protection they might derive from coats and blankets.

Most desperate of all was the plight of the inmates of the local hospital, some delirious from

fever, others the recent subjects of operations, still others on the very verge of death, whom doctors, nurses and attendants were working frantically to remove from the danger zone.

Panting, sweating and straining, the Radio Boys worked, flinching from no task, summoning up all their energies and taxing their vitality to the limit. They never thought of resting. They never thought of escaping.

Yet nothing would have been easier. All they had to do was to get up on the hillside and stay there, out of the reach of the flood if it should come. They had no kith or kin in Bottville. None of their personal or financial interests was at stake. If the town were wiped off the face of the earth they would be none the poorer. Every selfish impulse would have prompted them to flee.

But the thought did not even occur to any of them. The same heroic urge that brought them, held them there. An exalted mood had taken possession of them, lifting them out of themselves. Desert these fellow beings in their dire distress, these sick, these little children? Never!

So they toiled on, until by midnight every house in the town had been warned and visited and to a large extent cleared of its inhabitants. Then their work was extended to the cottages and farms on the outskirts.

Tom Dalney ran across Bob and Joe and Herb when they were helping load sand bags and cement on wagons that were to be sent up to the dam. His own team was waiting for its load.

"What's the news from the dam, Tom?" asked Bob eagerly.

Tom's face was clouded.

"Bad," he answered. "I'm afraid it won't hold out till morning. There are hundreds of men up there working like beavers, but the water's getting the best of them. The leaks are widening all the time, and as fast as they plug up one, two or three others come in its place."

"Has any help come from other towns?" asked Herb.

"Lots of it," replied Dalney. "All the roads up that way are crowded with wagons and automobiles bringing men from all about. They got your messages all right. In fact, if it hadn't been for their help, the dam would have given way before this. It's given us a fighting chance."

"Hark! What's that?" exclaimed Joe suddenly.

All listened, and far up the road heard the clear, silvery notes of a bugle.

"Glory hallelujah!" cried Bob. "The soldiers are coming!"

The blinding lights of a host of automobiles

came into view about a curve, and the cars bore swiftly down upon the town, followed by a convoy of trucks bearing all sorts of implements.

"It's the army engineers!" exclaimed Herb. "Uncle Sam's boys right on the job!"

"Now we'll get action!" exulted Bob, as he noted the calm, capable faces of the men in uniform who crowded the cars. "They'll know in a minute what's the best thing to be done and just how to tackle the work."

"It's the mercy of God that you fellows came down here with your radio," said Dalney reverently. "If the town is saved, it will be you who have done it. But now, why don't you boys take a little rest? You'll break down if you don't. It isn't in flesh and blood to work the way you're doing and stand up under it."

"Rest!" exclaimed Bob. "Rest, while there's so much to be done? Not on your life! Bring your wagon up alongside of these sandbags, Tom, and we'll have your load on in a jiffy."

Tom drove off with his load, to be replaced by others, and the boys kept on at the work until they had to stop because the supplies were exhausted.

Then they looked about them for their next job, which, as it happened, was furnished by the Red Cross. For the messengers of mercy of that beneficent society had followed close on the

heels of the engineers, and the doctors and nurses could utilize all the volunteer recruits that happened to be at hand. There was plenty of work to do in setting up the tents and distributing the supplies. The rolling kitchen was established on the edge of the camp, and the Radio Boys went from tent to tent carrying hot coffee to the inmates and contributing to their comfort in every way possible.

A little later came a detachment of the state militia, and in their rapid and efficient style took charge of the policing of the town and encampment, guarding the banks and business houses, and keeping a sharp lookout for the looters who were likely to be drawn like vultures to a feast.

It was nearly daylight when the four Radio Boys, spent, haggard, staggering, and ready to drop, found themselves once more together in the electric lighting plant. They had fought the good fight. They had kept the faith.

But had they won the victory? Would the dam hold? Those were the questions in their minds as, haggard and red-eyed, they faced each other, while dawn came through the windows.

"Looks as if we might win out after all," remarked Joe, with a wan smile. "It's been a—— What's that?"

A terrific roar, coming from a distance, shattered the air and made the building rock.

The boys looked at each other in consternation. They were as pale as death.

"Guess that settles it," said Bob, with forced calmness. "All our work goes for nothing. The dam has broken. The flood is coming."

There might still be time to flee to the higher ground. But their post was here. They stayed.

Moved by a common impulse, they shook hands all around and braced themselves for what might come. It would not be long now.

A signal came from the receiving set. Bob answered it.

"The last message we'll ever take," he murmured.

It was from the commander of the army engineer battalion.

Almost unbelievingly, Bob took the message, repeating it to his mates.

"Danger over. Have blown a passage at further end of the lake, releasing surplus water and relieving pressure on the dam. Congratulations."

The boys' reaction from despair to joy was something they could hardly put in words. They laughed. They wept. They hugged each other. They danced about the room.

Finally Bob rushed to the window and shouted to all the people who could hear:

"Safe! Safe! The dam holds! The danger is over!"

The news spread like wildfire, and when the tired but happy Radio Boys emerged from the building to return to the farm they found themselves in the hands of a frenzied throng of people who vied with each other to touch them, to embrace them, to carry them on their shoulders.

And a reception not less enthusiastic awaited them at the farm, where the neighbors had gathered to greet them and where Uncle Lon hugged them and Aunt Sally kissed and cried over them, both so full of pride and joy that they could not contain themselves.

The neighbors went away at last, and the boys sat down to a breakfast fit for a king. Then they tumbled into their beds and slept "round the clock," not stirring till the next morning.

"Score another for old radio," was Joe's first remark, as they met at the table. "Once more it came through in a pinch."

"It always does!" exulted Bob.

"The greatest thing ever!" acclaimed Jimmy.

"And that goes as it lays," declared Herb, more emphatically than grammatically.

The rest of their stay at Uncle Lon's was so crowded with grateful tributes from the people of Bottville and Horseshoe Valley as to embarrass the Radio Boys.

They were the guests of honor at a public reception, where prominent men made speeches lauding their exploits and where they were presented with handsome and costly gifts.

And when the day came for them to go back to Clintonia, almost the whole population of the place was at the station to bid them farewell, while the town band had a prominent place in the proceedings.

As the train was drawing out, it was the eldest of the Lasher boys who sprang on a pile of lumber near the track, waved his arms, and shouted:

"Now, people, good and loud: Who's all right?"

A thunderous shout went up in answer:

"The Radio Boys! They're all right!"

THE END

THE RADIO BOYS SERIES

(Trademark Registered)

By ALLEN CHAPMAN

Author of the "Railroad Series," Etc.

Individual Colored Wrappers. Illustrated.
Every Volume Complete in Itself.

A new series for boys giving full details of radio work, both in sending and receiving—telling how small and large amateur sets can be made and operated, and how some boys got a lot of fun and adventure out of what they did. Each volume from first to last is so thoroughly fascinating, so strictly up-to-date and accurate, we feel sure all lads will peruse them with great delight.

Each volume has a Foreword by Jack Binns, the well-known radio expert.

THE RADIO BOYS' FIRST WIRELESS;
Or, Winning the Ferberton Prize.

THE RADIO BOYS AT OCEAN POINT;
Or, The Messsage That Saved the Ship.

THE RADIO BOYS AT THE SENDING
Or, Making Good in the Wireless Room. STATION;

THE RADIO BOYS AT MOUNTAIN PASS;
Or, The Midnight Call for Assistance.

THE RADIO BOYS TRAILING A VOICE;
Or, Solving a Wireless Mystery.

THE RADIO BOYS WITH THE FOREST
Or, The Great Fire on Spruce Mountain. RANGERS;

THE RADIO BOYS WITH THE ICEBERG
Or, Making Safe the Ocean Lanes. PATROL;

RADIO BOYS WITH THE FLOOD FIGHTERS;
Or, Saving the City in the Valley.

GROSSET & DUNLAP, PUBLISHERS, NEW YORK

THE TOM SWIFT SERIES

By VICTOR APPLETON

Uniform Style of Binding. Individual Colored Wrappers. Every Volume Complete in Itself.

Every boy possesses some form of inventive genius. Tom Swift is a bright, ingenious boy and his inventions and adventures make the most interesting kind of reading.

TOM SWIFT AND HIS MOTOR CYCLE
TOM SWIFT AND HIS MOTOR BOAT
TOM SWIFT AND HIS AIRSHIP
TOM SWIFT AND HIS SUBMARINE BOAT
TOM SWIFT AND HIS ELECTRIC RUNABOUT
TOM SWIFT AND HIS WIRELESS MESSAGE
TOM SWIFT AMONG THE DIAMOND MAKERS
TOM SWIFT IN THE CAVES OF ICE
TOM SWIFT AND HIS SKY RACER
TOM SWIFT AND HIS ELECTRIC RIFLE
TOM SWIFT IN THE CITY OF GOLD
TOM SWIFT AND HIS AIR GLIDER
TOM SWIFT IN CAPTIVITY
TOM SWIFT AND HIS WIZARD CAMERA
TOM SWIFT AND HIS GREAT SEARCHLIGHT
TOM SWIFT AND HIS GIANT CANNON
TOM SWIFT AND HIS PHOTO TELEPHONE
TOM SWIFT AND HIS AERIAL WARSHIP
TOM SWIFT AND HIS BIG TUNNEL
TOM SWIFT IN THE LAND OF WONDERS
TOM SWIFT AND HIS WAR TANK
TOM SWIFT AND HIS AIR SCOUT
TOM SWIFT AND HIS UNDERSEA SEARCH
TOM SWIFT AND AMONG THE FIRE FIGHTERS
TOM SWIFT AND HIS ELECTRIC LOCOMOTIVE
TOM SWIFT AND HIS FLYING BOAT
TOM SWIFT AND HIS GREAT OIL GUSHER

GROSSET & DUNLAP, PUBLISHERS, NEW YORK

THE DON STURDY SERIES

By VICTOR APPLETON

Individual Colored Wrappers and Text Illustrations by
WALTER S. ROGERS
Every Volume Complete in Itself

In company with his uncles, one a mighty hunter and the other a noted scientist, Don Sturdy travels far and wide, gaining much useful knowledge and meeting many thrilling adventures.

DON STURDY ON THE DESERT OF MYSTERY;
Or, Autoing in the Land of the Caravans.

An engrossing tale of the Sahara Desert, of encounters with wild animals and crafty Arabs.

DON STURDY WITH THE BIG SNAKE HUNTERS;
Or, Lost in the Jungles of the Amazon.

Don's uncle, the hunter, took an order for some of the biggest snakes to be found in South America—to be delivered alive! The filling of that order brought keen excitement to the boy.

DON STURDY IN THE TOMBS OF GOLD;
Or, The Old Egyptian's Great Secret.

A fascinating tale of exploration and adventure in the Valley of Kings in Egypt. Once the whole party became lost in the maze of cavelike tombs far underground.

DON STURDY ACROSS THE NORTH POLE;
Or, Cast Away in the Land of Ice.

Don and his uncles joined an expedition bound by air across the north pole. A great polar blizzard nearly wrecks the airship.

DON STURDY IN THE LAND OF VOLCANOES;
Or, The Trail of the Ten Thousand Smokes.

An absorbing tale of adventures among the volcanoes of Alaska in a territory but recently explored. A story that will make Don dearer to his readers than ever.

GROSSET & DUNLAP, PUBLISHERS, NEW YORK

THE RAILROAD SERIES

By ALLEN CHAPMAN

Author of the "Radio Boys," Etc.

Uniform Style of Binding. Illustrated.
Every Volume Complete in Itself.

In this line of books there is revealed the whole workings of a great American railroad system. There are adventures in abundance—railroad wrecks, dashes through forest fires, the pursuit of a "wildcat" locomotive, the disappearance of a pay car with a large sum of money on board—but there is much more than this—the intense rivalry among railroads and railroad men, the working out of running schedules, the getting through "on time" in spite of all obstacles, and the manipulation of railroad securities by evil men who wish to rule or ruin.

RALPH OF THE ROUND HOUSE;
Or, Bound to Become a Railroad Man.

RALPH IN THE SWITCH TOWER;
Or, Clearing the Track.

RALPH ON THE ENGINE;
Or, The Young Fireman of the Limited Mail.

RALPH ON THE OVERLAND EXPRESS;
Or, The Trials and Triumphs of a Young Engineer.

RALPH, THE TRAIN DISPATCHER;
Or, the Mystery of the Pay Car.

RALPH ON THE ARMY TRAIN;
Or, The Young Railroader's Most Daring Exploit.

RALPH ON THE MIDNIGHT FLYER;
Or, The Wreck at Shadow Valley.

RALPH AND THE MISSING MAIL POUCH;
Or, The Stolen Government Bonds.

GROSSET & DUNLAP, PUBLISHERS, NEW YORK

THE RIDDLE CLUB BOOKS

By ALICE DALE HARDY

Individual Colored Wrappers. Attractively Illustrated.
Every Volume Complete in Itself.

Here is as ingenious a series of books for little folks as has ever appeared since "Alice in Wonderland." The idea of the Riddle books is a little group of children—three girls and three boys decide to form a riddle club. Each book is full of the adventures and doings of these six youngsters, but as an added attraction each book is filled with a lot of the best riddles you ever heard.

THE RIDDLE CLUB AT HOME

An absorbing tale that all boys and girls will enjoy reading. How the members of the club fixed up a clubroom in the Larue barn, and how they, later on, helped solve a most mysterious happening, and how one of the members won a valuable prize, is told in a manner to please every young reader.

THE RIDDLE CLUB IN CAMP

The club members went into camp on the edge of a beautiful lake. Here they had rousing good times swimming, boating and around the campfire. They fell in with a mysterious old man known as The Hermit of Triangle Island. Nobody knew his real name or where he came from until the propounding of a riddle solved these perplexing questions.

THE RIDDLE CLUB THROUGH THE HOLIDAYS

This volume takes in a great number of winter sports, including skating and sledding and the building of a huge snowman. It also gives the particulars of how the club treasurer lost the dues entrusted to his care and what the melting of the great snowman revealed.

THE RIDDLE CLUB AT SUNRISE BEACH

This volume tells how the club journeyed to the seashore and how they not only kept up their riddles but likewise had good times on the sand and on the water. Once they got lost in a fog and are marooned on an island. Here they made a discovery that greatly pleased the folks at home.

GROSSET & DUNLAP, PUBLISHERS, NEW YORK

THE FAMOUS ROVER BOYS SERIES

BY ARTHUR M. WINFIELD

(Edward Stratemeyer)

OVER THREE MILLION COPIES SOLD OF THIS SERIES

Uniform Style of Binding. Colored Wrappers.
Every Volume Complete in Itself.

THE ROVER BOYS AT SCHOOL
THE ROVER BOYS ON THE OCEAN
THE ROVER BOYS IN THE JUNGLE
THE ROVER BOYS OUT WEST
THE ROVER BOYS ON THE GREAT LAKES
THE ROVER BOYS IN THE MOUNTAINS
THE ROVER BOYS ON LAND AND SEA
THE ROVER BOYS IN CAMP
THE ROVER BOYS ON THE RIVER
THE ROVER BOYS ON THE PLAINS
THE ROVER BOYS IN SOUTHERN WATERS
THE ROVER BOYS ON THE FARM
THE ROVER BOYS ON TREASURE ISLE
THE ROVER BOYS AT COLLEGE
THE ROVER BOYS DOWN EAST
THE ROVER BOYS IN THE AIR
THE ROVER BOYS IN NEW YORK
THE ROVER BOYS IN ALASKA
THE ROVER BOYS IN BUSINESS
THE ROVER BOYS ON A TOUR
THE ROVER BOYS AT COLBY HALL
THE ROVER BOYS ON SNOWSHOE ISLAND
THE ROVER BOYS UNDER CANVAS
THE ROVER BOYS ON A HUNT
THE ROVER BOYS IN THE LAND OF LUCK
THE ROVER BOYS AT BIG HORN RANCH
THE ROVER BOYS AT BIG BEAR LAKE
THE ROVER BOYS SHIPWRECKED

GROSSET & DUNLAP, PUBLISHERS, NEW YORK

THE RADIO BOYS with the FLOOD FIGHTERS

ALLEN CHAPMAN

Grosset & Dunlap